

To Bill
Best wishes
from
Jean & Alec

XMAS '51.



GET YOUR MAN

GET YOUR MAN

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE
NORTH-WEST MOUNTED

By
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To
W. F. ANDREWES
GRATEFULLY

FOREWORD

THIS is a true, straightforward account of the most eventful period of my life—the seven years (from 1907 to 1914) which I spent as a constable of the Royal North-West Mounted.

I do not think my adventures were more extraordinary than those of many other constables, but they were filled with a lot of dangerous episodes and hair-breadth escapes and I came into contact with many strange people of such diverse character as a quack doctor, a couple of crook dentists, a counterfeiter, countless Indians and half-breeds often mad-drunk on forbidden "fire-water," hobos, a safe-breaker, the much-discussed Doukhobors, a number of murderers, a religious maniac, and, in fact, madmen of all descriptions. For obvious reasons I have had to alter some of the names of these people, for many of them are probably still living to-day.

Some of the strangest characters I met were fellow-constables.

I fell in love, during those seven years, with three different girls, and each of my love-affairs ended disastrously.

It is now just twenty years since I left the Force and since then I have been told often that, as the job of writing has never been much labour to me,

I ought to put down on paper for the benefit of the public some of my experiences.

I have had a full and varied life since the War, and though I always intended one day to write this book, I have never until now had a chance of getting down to it.

I hope, after reading this foreword, you will not expect to be plunged straightway into the middle of a wild episode of madness and murder. In my earnestness to tell a true tale I am beginning at the very beginning, and I'm afraid the crackers and the squibs won't start banging from the word go!

All the same, I hope you enjoy reading of my adventures as much as I have enjoyed remembering them and writing them down.

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GET YOUR MAN



PART ONE
SASKATCHEWAN

CHAPTER I

A ROLL OF TARPAULIN AND A SWOLLEN FACE

I

It was in the small front parlour of No. 23 River Street, Toronto, that my father first asked me the time-old question that I suppose every father asks a son at one time or another. I think I was only about ten years old at the time. I can remember the big, shiny, slippery arm-chair that my father always sat in, and the big clock on the mantelpiece with the very loud tick. He lifted me on to his knees and he said to me:

"Well, son, and what do you want to be when you grow up?"

And I answered without a moment's hesitation:

"I want to be a policeman—a policeman on a horse with a big hat and a red coat and . . . and a big moustache like Mr. Mayne."

Mr. Mayne was a friend of my father's who was in the Force, and he had once dressed up in his North-West Mounted kit to show it off to the family.

I was very angry because my father laughed at my reply and said to me:

"Wouldn't you rather be an engine-driver?"

But as I grew older I stuck always to the same answer, until my parents began really to think there was something in it.

"If the lad wants to join the Force, well, let him!" my father said once emphatically to my mother when she was trying to put the idea out of my head by relating to me the terrible hardships that the "Mounted" men had to endure. "If it does nothing else, it will make a man out of him."

I always remembered that remark of his, and in after years when I saw a lot of so-called men join the Force who, after a few months' training as recruits, became *real* men for the first time in their lives, I knew how true it was.

My parents were fairly comfortably off and were able to send me to quite a good private school, which I did not leave until I was sixteen. That meant I had to fill in time with jobs of some sort for four years, for the earliest age for taking recruits was twenty.

I got a job in a show at Hanlon's Point, a little place just outside Toronto. I worked in the side-shows and earned a small but very necessary weekly wage. My parents who had, as I said, been fairly comfortably off, had now fallen upon evil times, and it was necessary for me to help to keep myself. The job was not an interesting one, but I made a good pal there, a chap called Jim Harding. A dark, fine-looking lad he was, with startling bright blue eyes that looked somehow as if they'd got there by mistake, they were such a vivid blue and everything else about him was so dark.

Jim was about the same age as I was and when I told him I was going to join the Royal North-West Mounted (as it was called in those days) as soon as

I was old enough, he grew quite excited about the idea and asked me all sorts of questions about the kind of life the "Mounted" men led. I'd read all sorts of nonsense about it and I'd also learnt a certain amount of truth from my father's friend, Mr. Maync, and I told Jim everything I knew, adding, I expect, a little bit of colourful detail of my own!

That was when I'd been in the show about a month and had only known Jim a few days, but from that moment Jim swore that he'd join up with me when we were both twenty, no matter how much his parents objected. He dared not tell them anything about it at present, he said, because he knew they would be very angry. For some reason they had an objection to the Force. Anyway there were still four years to wait. . . .

In the winter I found myself out of a job again, but jobs of one sort or another didn't seem very scarce out Toronto way in those days, and I worked during the winter of 1904 for a piano company.

Back again in the summer to the show, and Jim with me. I forget what he did with himself during the winter. His family were fairly well-off, so perhaps he did nothing. Jim's family consisted of himself, his father and mother, and a sister whose name was Mary. They lived out at Hanlon's Point and, while I was working in the show, they often used to ask me out to their place to have a meal, and I got to know them pretty well.

I got very fond of Mary. She was a pretty little thing, nearly two years older than I was, but not

more than ~~about~~ five feet tall. She had the same bright blue eyes that Jim had, but they didn't look so startling with her for she was fair like her mother. Mr. Harding, the father, was a dark, very straight, handsome man, and, except for his blue eyes, Jim took after him.

For a long time Mary and I carried on a mild sort of boy-and-girl affair. I told Jim once I thought she was the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen.

"Yes," he answered grudgingly, "she may be. But she's got the devil of a temper."

A year or two later I was to find that out!

I got promoted, at the end of my second season with the show-people, to a higher, but certainly a no more pleasant position. I was given the job of "speiling"; that is, of standing outside the show, dressed up in a gorgeous uniform to shout out to the public the attractions of the show within. I was provided with an enormous megaphone and during the last fortnight of the 1904 season I thoroughly enjoyed the added dignity (and the small addition to my pay-roll) that came with the new position. But the following year, after a whole season of it, I can tell you I was heartily sick of the job.

I was a big, strong lad by this time (I must have been pretty hefty-looking to have been given the "speiling" job) and I itched to start on a real man's job instead of wasting my time on foolish, meaningless jobs in Hanlon's Point and Toronto. Jim, who was taller than I was, but not so robust, felt the same as I did, but he'd still not said a word about his ambition

to join the "Mounted." He'd decided it was better to spring it on his parents at the last minute.

Well, the years 1905 and 1906 rolled by somehow, and in the early summer of 1907, when Jim was twenty and I was twenty all but a month, I began to make enquiries about the next time the recruiting officer was visiting Toronto. I was told he was expected some time in August. So Jim and I had to be patient for another three months. Then at last, in August, the recruiting officer came.

Jim and I went along at the first opportunity; both of us passed the medical examination, and we were provisionally accepted as recruits of the Royal North-West Mounted. We only had a week in which to get ready and then we were to be whisked off to Regina, in Southern Saskatchewan, to begin our training for one of the stiffest jobs in the world.

When I came out of the office I felt almost light-headed with pleasure; I felt as if I were stepping on air. My long-nursed ambition was really coming to something! I was starting on a real man's job at last!

"Gee!" I exclaimed to Jim, "it's great to feel we're starting in together on this new life. And I kinda feel that you and I are going to make a darn good job of it!"

I felt on top of life at that moment, full of confidence for the future. I wondered why Jim didn't respond; I looked at him and saw that he was frowning.

"What's up?" I asked him.

"I'm just a little anxious about telling the parents," he confessed with a half-grin.

"They won't like it?"

"No, they won't like it."

"It's not a bit of use putting it off any longer," I warned him. "You ought to have told them long ago."

"Yes," he answered gloomily, "you're right, Jim. I ought to have told them long ago."

"Why not get along home and tell them straight away?" I suggested. "Surely they can't stop you once they know you've been passed, and they mightn't even object if they see you've set your heart on it."

Jim nodded, and went off rather miserably.

I was so busy during the next few days getting ready and saying good-bye to all my pals who lived in and around Toronto that I forgot all about Jim's worries. In fact I hardly saw him. I only had a few days left, and naturally I spent as much time as I could at home with my mother and father; I didn't go out to the Hardings' place at all.

I did see Jim once or twice during those few days but he never mentioned he was having any trouble with his family and I took it for granted that everything was all right. A couple of days before we were due to leave, however, he came round to my place to have a chat and I noticed he was very glum indeed.

"You *are* a fellow, Jim," I said. "Just when you ought to be as bucked as blazes you mope about as

if life was one long worry. It isn't only the idea of leaving the happy home that's troubling you, is it?"

"No, it's not that, Bob. I——"

I brought my fist down with a crash on to the table as the truth suddenly dawned on me.

"You haven't said a darn word about the show to your parents. That's what it is, isn't it?"

"You've said it."

Jim sat back in his chair with his hands thrust disconsolately in his coat pockets, looking the picture of dejection.

"You're a fool," I told him bluntly. "You're coming right home with me now and you're going to tell the old folks straight that you're joining the Royal North-West Mounted Police Force, and if they kick up a row I'll be there to put in a good word at the right moment."

We went together to Jim's house at Hanlon's Point but when we got there he wouldn't let me come in. He said he'd rather tell them by himself. I thought this was a very much better plan myself and, as it seemed he'd really keyed himself up to do it this time, I was just about to go off and leave him. Unfortunately the door opened at that moment and Mary came out, looking very sweet. I hadn't seen her for some days in the excitement of getting ready, and I'd almost forgotten how pretty she was. She pouted a little when she saw me.

"You're a stranger here nowadays," she said. "I think it's rather mean of you not to come and see me when you're going away so soon."

I apologised and told her how terribly busy I'd been.

"Well come along in now anyway," she said.

I saw Jim shake his head.

"Sorry, Mary. I've just got to get back home now. I'll come up and see you to-morrow."

She turned her back on me abruptly and followed Jim into the house. She was annoyed. Oh, hell, I thought, and I'd have liked to have taken her in my arms, the little wretch. . . .

It was early the next morning that my mother came to me and told me that Mary Harding was waiting to see me in the sitting-room.

"She wouldn't say what she wanted," my mother said. "She looked pale, I thought. I hope nothing's the matter with Jim."

I couldn't imagine what Mary wanted either. I had never known her come to my house before without an invitation. For a second the conceited thought flashed through me that she couldn't bear the thought of my going away, and, afraid I wasn't going up to see her, had come down specially to say good-bye. But I soon put that idea out of my head. It was so unlike Mary.

When I went into the sitting-room she was standing with her back to the door, staring out of the window. She turned round abruptly. My mother was right: she *was* pale.

"Well, Mary," I began, "it's an unexpected pleasure to see you here. I——"

My voice trailed off rather foolishly for she was staring at me in such a strange way.

"Why, Mary," I began again, "what——"

"Cut that out!" she exclaimed savagely. "You know why I've come here, I suppose?"

"I can't imagine why you've come," I said rather irritably. What was the matter with the girl?

She took a step towards me, very pale, and with clenched fists.

"How dare you try and take Jim away from us! How dare you put all these fine stupid stories of the Mounted Police into his head! How dare you! How dare you!"

This was terrible. She couldn't understand. . . .

"Mary . . ." I said and walked swiftly across to her.

She fell back.

"Don't touch me! Keep your hands off me, you . . . you cad!"

I touched her on the shoulder and she hit out at me frantically with her clenched fists. I took hold of her arms and held them down to her sides. She struggled but I held her firm.

"You're being ridiculous," I told her quietly. "Will you be sensible for a minute and listen to me?"

She stopped struggling and I relaxed my hold.

"I don't expect you'll believe me," I said, "but it's the truth that Jim intended to join the North-West Mounted four years ago."

"I don't want to know when you first put the idea into his head," she burst out. "The fact remains that you're entirely responsible. He'd never have dreamt of joining if you hadn't persuaded him.

He can't go! It's impossible! Mother and father are in an awful state. And I . . . can't bear to think of him going. . . ." She suddenly broke down and began to cry.

"But what do you want me to do, Mary? Nothing can be done."

She looked up suddenly.

"Oh, yes, it can. You can persuade him not to go. You've got more influence with him than any of us. He's coming round to see you. He had an awful row with father this morning. I slipped out and came along here so that I could see you first. You must stop him! You must!"

"All right. Stop crying, Mary. I'll see what I can do. But if he's set on joining, and I know he is, I don't see how I'm going to stop him."

She left the house after that, and a few minutes later along came Jim looking glummer than ever.

"I've had the hell of a row——" he began.

"I know."

He stared at me.

"How——"

"Mary's been round."

"Whew!" He wiped his brow.

"You'd better give up the idea, Jim."

"Give it up? I'm more set on going than ever I was. Give it up? That's what they've been shouting at me ever since I spilt the beans last night. I didn't come here to hear you saying it."

"You've upset your mother and father and . . . Mary a good deal."

"I don't care, I'm going," Jim said sullenly.

And that was that.

I didn't see Mary again, though Jim said even she had come round more to his way of thinking by the time he left. And his mother (who had never objected very strongly) and his father were more or less reconciled to the idea, too, at the end. It proved what I said to Jim that everything would have been all right if he had told them about the idea years before and hadn't sprung it on them suddenly a couple of days before he was due to start.

It was an unfortunate end to my first love-affair—if it could be called a love-affair. Certainly I was very fond of Mary. Jim said she was fond of me and was more annoyed, he thought, about my not coming to see her than about my supposed luring of him away from home. I don't know whether this was true. Quite possibly. They're funny creatures, women; I shall never understand them to the end of my days.

I had three love affairs from the time I left school until the War, two mild ones and one not so mild. All of them ended disastrously. Mary's was one of them. But in the excitement of joining the "Mounted" I soon got over that. The other two ended even more dismally, and you shall hear about them later on. The North-West Mounted hardened me in lots of ways, and one of the things it hardened me against was disillusionment about love. It's funny how one man's affairs run smooth for a whole trip, and another man is given a rough passage from

first to last. I used to resent Fate pushing its way into my private affairs. But seven years in the North-West Mounted taught me to be a philosopher. Things just have a habit of happening that way. That's all.

Well, after the usual tedious farewells which both of us hated, Jim and I found ourselves in the train with the other recruits from the Toronto district. As we slowly moved out from the Union Station we raised a cheer. All the unknown future was ahead of us, and the future seemed specially bright just then.

II

A short break at Winnipeg. Then on again. We reached Regina on a cold crisp day, but the sun was shining and, with some hot cocoa in us, we felt ready to face the severest cold and to enjoy the severest training that could be meted out to us.

We were quartered in a concert-hall in the middle of the barrack-square. Blankets didn't seem quite as numerous as we'd have liked. Most of us felt pretty cold that first night. Surprising the difference in temperature between Regina and Toronto. The next day—Sunday—the inevitable Church Parade. Then a medical examination. It wasn't often a man failed to pass the test at this stage, for the examinations back in their home towns were thorough enough. It was more a matter of formality. It never occurred to any of us that we weren't fit, and we'd probably have felt like knocking the officer on the jaw if he'd said that we weren't!

Of course, by this time we had our uniforms—

the old familiar uniform that I learnt to love so much, and which when I see it now still stirs in me the kind of emotion I felt when I first saw it, worn by my boyhood hero, Mr. Mayne. The blue breeches with the wide yellow stripe; the red serge tunic; the wide-rimmed stetson; the high-legged brown boots; the Sam Browne belt; the gauntlet gloves; a uniform to make a man proud of serving the North-West Mounted, to stir him to fearless selfless deeds of courage, to make him forget the petty things in life and see and do the *big* things only, to make a man big-hearted, brave. . . .

Perhaps you smile to hear me talking like this. How can a uniform lead a man to a bolder better way of life? How can a mere uniform mean so much to any man? I have often been asked these questions, but there isn't any answer. I can only say that that was what it meant to me.

The uniform I have described is not, of course, quite the same in the cold season or in the more Northern districts. Then we wore fur hats, short fur coats, fur gauntlets, and moccasins—boots which were made only by the Indians. There's not a man who's served in the North-West Mounted who hasn't at one time or another suffered agonies from the intense cold; so you can imagine the more fur we had about us, the better we liked it. Funnily enough, the worst experience I ever had, not of a prolonged cold period but of a sudden devastating cold that took one unawares and knocked one almost senseless with the suddenness of it, was actually in Regina,

and not by the frozen stretches, Mackenzie River way, or on the borders of Alaska. That was in 1911, in June, and the temperature suddenly dropped to 40° below zero. . . . But more of that later.

Two or three weeks after Jim and I got to Regina an incident occurred which impressed me a great deal. I was strolling along with Jim on the parade-ground when suddenly there were shouts of warning and a fellow called Travers—Puggy Travers we always used to call him—came galloping along on a vicious-looking mare. Puggy was a cheery, tough little fellow, very popular with the men, and a whole crowd of them collected when the mare started bucking and making a general nuisance of herself, with Puggy clinging on like grim death. There were some high officials hanging around too, as it happened, and they came out to have a look as well.

It wasn't long before Puggy was thrown, and a nasty cropper he came too, but he was up in a second and on the mare again before you could realise he'd been thrown at all. She seemed quite surprised to find Puggy back again and for a moment she stood quite still as if considering what to do next. Puggy coaxed her on. In a flash she was off, but stopped as suddenly as she had started and poor Puggy slithered gently forward over her neck. He wasn't a very expert rider at that time, but that mare would have been more than a match for the best rider at the depot that day. She had a demon in her, and when Puggy, nothing daunted, mounted

her again, her eyes flashed dangerously. Then she started bucking and rearing, and brought out her whole bag of tricks, which was a pretty large one. One or two of the men rushed forward to control her, but Puggy shouted at them to get away. His funny little wrinkled face, rather like a monkey's, was puckered and grim. His mouth was set in a hard, firm line. He was determined to get the better of the animal, or die in the attempt.

If Puggy was thrown once that afternoon he was thrown a dozen times! He must have been terribly bruised, but his spirit remained indomitable. And he won the struggle. The mare, possibly through exhaustion, possibly because the monotony of it bored her, at last mended her behaviour and trotted meekly round the parade-ground with Puggy, very dishevelled but grinning triumphantly, the victor of the battle.

As a reward for his courage and perseverance he was made a rough-riding corporal, a position of some importance. It was a stroke of luck for him that some officers had been watching the whole affair, and been struck by his remarkable tenacity.

As I say, it impressed me a lot, this little incident. It showed me that perseverance and tenacity—sticking to the job you're given and not leaving off until it's done, however great the barriers put in your way—were qualities that counted for a great deal in the North-West Mounted. It was a good thing I learnt that lesson early, for it was one that I never forgot, and it was the one really important

lesson that has to be impressed on all North-West Mounted men. It is summed up in the unforgettable slogan: "GET YOUR MAN."

III

There was a fellow called Nelson stationed at Regina, and a nasty bit of work he was! He was hefty-looking, and swaggered about as if he owned the place. He'd finished his recruiting days but hadn't yet been stationed anywhere else. No one liked him much, and I think a lot of the men were a bit afraid of him. He was the last person you'd think would clear off, desert, because he couldn't stand the Force any longer. Well, that's what he did—the only man I knew, personally, who did so—and indirectly I was responsible.

It all started with the fight between Jim Harding and Teddy Collins. Teddy was the son of a civilian tailor, Old Man Collins, a wizened little man, not unlike Puggy Travers, and equally popular with the men. He was tremendously proud of this son of his, and when Teddy and Jim had a bit of a quarrel it was he who suggested that they should fight it out. So Jim and Teddy set to one evening and most of the recruits came along to watch. Nelson came along as well, for he considered himself a bit of an expert in the boxing line. Much to my annoyance he attached himself to me, chiefly, I think, because he knew I was a pal of Jim's and it pleased him to make sarcastic remarks about Jim's fighting in front of me.

If that was his intention it was bad luck for him that Teddy came off worst in that little bout. They were both plucky young boxers, but though Teddy was much tougher-built than Jim, he hadn't the skill that Jim had and he didn't use his brain.

When the fight was over and Teddy, grinning rather ruefully, had shaken hands, Nelson turned to me and said in a loud voice:

"If that fellow Collins was in my hands for a few weeks he'd be a darn fine boxer at the end of it."

"You fancy yourself as a trainer, do you?" I asked insolently. I was just about fed up with the man's conceit.

He glared at me.

"There's not a man at this depot who can beat me at the boxing game," he boasted. "Anyone can see that all young Collins wants is a bit of training and there's no one here who could do it better than I could."

"I'm not so sure," I drawled casually. (Inwardly I was boiling and itched to zonk him one on the jaw.)

"What d'you mean, 'you're not so sure'?" he roared. An angry flush spread over his face. He was not used to being answered back. There was quite a crowd of recruits round us now, attracted by Nelson's angry tones.

"Well," I answered, "I sort of feel I could do it better myself."

"Oh, you do, do you? You think a lot of yourself, don't you?"

"I certainly think more of myself than I think of you."

Nelson spluttered with rage.

"You . . . you. . . ." Suddenly he brought his great fist down with a bang into the palm of his other hand. "Right! It won't take long to find out who's the better man for training young Collins. We'll fight it out, you and I, Mister Cocky Dyker! What about it, eh?"

"That's just what I was going to suggest."

"Oh, you were, were you?" He looked at me suspiciously, couldn't make out if I was bluffing him or not. Then he turned round to the other recruits. "Hear that, you guys? Nelson v. Dyker, that's the bill for to-morrow night. Oh, you'll have some fun to-morrow night, lads. If you're wanting a good laugh, come and watch our little bout!"

He went off laughing uproariously. But I could see he was puzzled by my nonchalant attitude. He was a bit uneasy in spite of all his boasting.

Now, it wasn't altogether in the heat of the moment that I had decided to fight Nelson. I had thought of it for some time. I had always done a good deal of boxing from the time I was quite a small kid and I thought I should probably be able to account for Nelson all right, in spite of his bulk and weight. As a matter of fact, I had given Jim a good deal of coaching back in Toronto and it had nettled me to hear him criticising Jim's methods.

Well, I'm not going to describe my fight with Nelson. I had so many fights of various kinds during

my seven years in the Mounted that if I described them all to you there wouldn't be much room left in this book for anything else. Enough to say that I won—and handsomely. It was a hard fight, one of the hardest I ever had, but I knocked him out with a good, clean uppercut; I can still remember the satisfactory feeling that uppercut had! He left me with a black eye and a swollen lip, but that didn't worry me. I probably didn't damage him outwardly so much as he damaged me, but one thing I did damage of his, and that thing counted more than anything else—I damaged his pride!

There was no doubt Nelson's little day had finished on that night when I knocked him out. Mind you, he could box; it wasn't that he put up a bad show. No, it was the fact that a bully, and a boastful bully at that, had been knocked out, fair and square, that was the beginning of the end for him. From that moment the recruits gave him a real bad time. He started his bullying ways again a day or two after the fight, but they didn't last long! They tied him up and left him in the middle of the barrack-square, they held him down and shaved off the little moustache he was so proud of,—I don't know what they didn't do. After a month or two of this he became a miserable, drooping specimen, a remarkable change from the pompous overbearing Nelson that he used to be. It was a proof, to me at anyrate, that there was nothing behind all his boasting. He was a coward when it came to the test. His great ugly eyes—he had abnormally large ones—seemed

to become still larger and uglier, and they were always peering about furtively as though they expected some hidden danger to spring out at them.

Then suddenly one day he disappeared!

Of course there was great excitement. At first I thought, and some of the others thought, that it was only another of the tricks that were played on him. But no one seemed to know anything about him, and it wasn't long before a gang of men under a sergeant was sent out to scour Regina in search of him.

There had been an exhibition on in the town, and there were a great number of caravans and conveyances of various sorts all preparing to leave the town, for the exhibition had finished.

"I shouldn't be surprised if he's hiding in one of these waggon," someone in our group suggested.

I was feeling rather fed up with the search.

"What we want to find the man for, I don't know," I said sulkily. "No one will want him if he is found."

However, it turned out that I was the man destined to find him, and hand him over to the authorities.

We searched many of the waggons and caravans and generally annoyed the owners of them. It was getting late and most of the waggons had moved off, baggage and all, so that the chances were that, if he had managed to stow himself away in one of them, he was well away by this time. "And good riddance to him," I thought. I had reached at this moment a waggon full of rolled-up tarpaulin and odd junk, and had almost decided it wasn't

really worth the trouble of getting up to have a look. However, I *did* get up, and it was darn bad luck on the Nelson guy that I did.

I peered along one of the biggest rolls of tarpaulin. It was getting dusk and it was almost impossible to see if anything was there or not. Suddenly as my eyes got a little more accustomed to the g'oom I thought I saw something glistening. I listened in'ently but I could hear no sign of breathing. I peered in again. This time I was sure of it. Two round glistening objects. . . . No other man in the district could have eyes like that. Nelson's eyes, d stended in fear; a horrible sight. I shouted to the others to come and assist me, and thrust in an arm.

Nelson was in too big a panic to resist. He "came along quietly" as they say, and for his sins got six months in the guard-room and was discharged at the end of it.

That was my first capture, and I can't say I am particularly proud of it. I would just as soon have seen the poor devil get away. And anyway there wasn't much credit due to me for finding him; it was just a piece of luck. However, I was to find out later that luck plays an important part in a Mounted Policeman's life; very often it makes just the difference between "Getting your Man" and not getting him!

The Nelson episode provided a mild excitement for us, but on the whole those first three months as a recruit and the following three months when I was stil stationed at Regina were fairly uneventful—

at least, uneventful when compared with the experiences I was to go through in later years. We had to work hard, but we were all young, and keen to pass out and get on to sterner work. There were, of course, a few "black sheep" amongst us who were not particularly anxious to do anything much except drink and have a good time. Curiously enough, you seldom found a remittance-man (a man sent out by his family to keep him out of the way) unenthusiastic. The remittance-men I knew were among the finest Mounted Policemen I ever met. Reckless, perhaps; but then you need a strain of recklessness in your blood to become a good Mounted Policeman.

I say there were a few "black sheep," but now that I come to recall them I can only think of one, and he wasn't a bad fellow really—just a bit too fond of the bottle. His name was Forbes. He was an Englishman and, I imagine, of quite a good family. The penalties for getting drunk were very serious, but it wasn't often a man got caught. There was a lot of good comradeship among the recruits and, if they saw a fellow was one-over-the-eight, they generally managed to keep him out of the way of the officers. I can't remember anyone getting caught while I was stationed at Regina. Certainly no one ever came up for a third offence; the punishment for that was six months in the guard-room and discharged from the Force—the same as Nelson got for desertion. Even old Ginger Forbes, as we used to call him (he had a crop of flaming red hair, and rosy

chceks to match), never actually got caught by the authorities.

After we had been at Regina for a couple of months the weather got suddenly colder. We were snowed up and, as none of us were used to very severe weather, we were all shivering in spite of the generous fires that were blazing everywhere inside.

I was sitting over a fire one afternoon after some riding instruction when Jim came running into the room.

"Bob," he gasped urgently, "Ginger's drunk!"

"Well!" I answered sleepily. "Hasn't he often been drunk before? What's biting you?"

"But he looks sort of queer. . . ."

"Queer?"

"Yes, his face is funny. . . ."

I jumped up.

"You're talking a lot of rot, Jim," I said. "But I'll come and have a look at him if that's what you want me to do."

"Yes, come on, quick," he urged. "It seems to me he's kind of sickening for something. . . ."

Jim hurried me off to a room where Ginger was sitting in front of an enormous fire. He looked half asleep and at first I could see nothing the matter with him.

"Well, what's wrong?" I demanded.

"Can't you see, man? His face. . . ."

I looked closer and saw to my horror that Ginger's face certainly looked very strange indeed. One side of it was swelling rapidly. I could distinctly

see it swelling as I watched. It was a revolting sight.

"Mumps, is it?" whispered Jim.

I ignored this fatuous suggestion.

"Why, the man's crazy to sit over that fire!" I gasped.

Jim stared blankly at me. He hadn't the slightest idea what was the matter.

"Ginger!" I yelled, "you've got to get out of here and be mighty quick about it, too."

"Why, whashmatter?"

His face looked as if it was going to burst at any moment. I have never in the whole of my experience seen such a fearful sight. It was made more awful by the fact that Ginger didn't seem to realise that anything was wrong. I knew his cheek could and *would* burst if he remained by the fire any longer.

"Come on, Jim!" I shouted. "We'll have to get him out by force."

The cheek still swelled. Ginger's right eye was completely closed. And still he didn't realise that anything was wrong. Jim and I rushed forward and carried him bodily out.

"Open the outer door!" I yelled to Jim when we got out into the passage.

Jim must have thought I was mad, but fortunately he didn't question anything I said. Together we stumbled out into the snow with our strange burden. It was snowing hard for the winter had begun in earnest, and an icy blast swept through us. We flung Ginger down into the snow.

"Rub his cheek like mad!" I gasped, and took up a great handful of snow and smothered his face with it. His cheek felt like a blown-up balloon, and I shuddered as I touched it. He spluttered and kicked out.

"Hold him down. I'll do the work," I said to Jim.

At last, to my intense relief, the swelling began to subside. I was so intent on what I was doing that I didn't at first hear the shout that came from the open door. But I saw Jim looking a bit scared, and I glanced up to see an officer standing there.

"D'you hear what I say!" he roared. "Stop that disgraceful fighting at once and come inside!"

CHAPTER II

FIRE-WATER!

I

IT took me a bit of time to explain to the officer what all the fuss was about, but when he realised we hadn't been fighting and heard what was really wrong, he congratulated me upon acting as promptly as I had done. Fortunately he didn't realise that Ginger was drunk; as a matter of fact my drastic cure of his swollen face seemed also to have been a good cure for his drunkenness, for he spoke to the officer quite soberly. Ginger's face was extremely painful for some time afterwards and he went temporarily on the sick list. The cause of it all was, as I suspected, that he had been out all day in the bitter cold and had come straight in to sit by an enormous fire—a fatal thing to do, and it was a stroke of luck for him that we had seen his condition in time and perhaps saved his life.

Training-days were not packed with excitement like the rest of my time in the North-West Mounted, so I want to stop talking about my first six months in Regina and get on to the time when I was transferred to another station at Indian Head, a smallish place about sixty miles away. Before I do this, however, I must tell you something about Molly Cornish; for, at that time, and a few years later

when I was to hear of her again under very strange circumstances, she played an important part in my life.

She was a small, dark, impulsive creature, the daughter of a prominent Regina tradesman. I met her first at a dance up at the barracks. There used to be a good many of those dances, and it wasn't long before I got to know Molly well. She wasn't beautiful, but everything she did and felt was passionate and intense, and it was this earnestness and intensity of purpose (wilfulness, some people called it) that first attracted me to her.

I'm not going to give you long drawn-out descriptions of our love-making, for there are professional authors who can do that sort of thing a great deal better than I can; and anyway this is a book about the North-West Mounted and not about the silly whisperings of a couple of love-sick youngsters.

Suffice it to say that Molly meant an awful lot to me, and though I was very glad in one way to hear that I was going to be moved to the Indian Head station, I was depressed at the thought of leaving her behind. I knew what a headstrong, impulsive girl she was, and I imagined her getting into all kinds of trouble without me there to look after her (for I fondly imagined that as long as I was near her she could come to no harm).

"Good-bye, Bob," she whispered, when I went down to see her for the last time. "I know you're going to make a wonderful success of your 'Mounted' work. Don't forget all about me, will you?"

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I took her in my arms.

"Forget about you, girlic?" (That was what I used to call her.) "Forget about you? I'll never forget you as long as I live. You'll write?"

"Yes, I'll write. And you?"

"Of course."

We kissed. And parted. I never saw Molly again. But I heard of her later on, and under tragic circumstances. Poor impulsive, silly little girl! What a long and sad payment you had to make for one act of impetuous folly!

II

Indian Head. New pals. New quarters. Everything strange. Little Molly Cornish, and tall, handsome, friendly Jim Harding, away back at Regina, and I without a friend in this goldarned hole! That was my first impression, but first impressions are rotten bad impressions. After a bit I began to think: Oh, well, it's not too bad. And I am on the move while poor old Jim's still standing still. I'm a full-blooded Mounted Policeman now, and I'm darned well going to make a good job of it!

It annoyed me that for the first few weeks no jobs came my way by which I could test myself. I wanted trouble, which is going a long way towards getting it. But when at last trouble did come my way it was when I wasn't looking for it. That's how things happen.

I was patrolling the district around Indian Head one day. But, as I had come to expect, things were

very quiet; there wasn't any trouble within miles. Paddy and I jogged along at an easy pace, and the monotony of it had begun to make me feel drowsy: I began nodding in my saddle. It was towards the end of the day and I was going back to barracks. There was no need for me to guide Paddy; he knew the way as well as I did. I don't think I've told you about Paddy before. He was my horse; and one of the cleverest horses I've ever had the good fortune to ride. I was devoted to him. I'd received all my early training on him at Regina, and when I left there I implored to be allowed to take him with me. It wasn't usual, but an exception was made, and so Paddy and I came together to Indian Head.

As I say, I was drowsing in the saddle and Paddy was carrying me homewards. But suddenly he stopped, threw up his head, and stood as if listening. I jerked back to consciousness with a start, and in an instant was on the alert. Mostly the Mounted Police are liked and respected in the North-West, but to some men the red tunic is like a red rag to a bull, and it pays to be always on the alert. You never know what you're going to come up against.

We were going through a patch of Bush at the time (there is a certain amount of Bush-country up that way) and I couldn't see anything ahead or to the side that might have startled Paddy. He seemed to be quivering with excitement, but he was a highly-strung animal at the best of times, and I didn't think anything of it.

"Come along, old boy," I said soothingly. "There's nothing wrong."

I urged him on, and we moved off again slowly.

A few seconds later I checked him abruptly. A weird, horrible noise was coming from the Bush. High-pitched hysterical screeches that tore harshly across the silence of the Bush. Blood-curdling screeches . . . uncanny . . . inhuman. . . . Paddy gave a little whinny; he began to sweat with excitement and fear.

I patted his neck to try and reassure him.

"Quiet! Quiet, old boy!" I whispered.

Then I leapt off and flung the reins over his back. I knew he wouldn't budge from the spot however terrified he became.

The screeches stopped abruptly. The silence afterwards seemed interminable. Then once more the noise began, and this time it seemed more like a human voice. The voice was raised, high and quavering. Some goldarned idiot in the Bush was trying to sing. I plunged into the Bush in the direction of the noise. As I disappeared from sight, I heard Paddy stamp his foot on the road, anxiously, impatiently.

The singing stopped as abruptly as it had begun. I lost my sense of direction, and with nothing to guide me, could go no further. I stood stock still, listening. . . .

No sound. Not even the snapping of a twig. I stayed motionless, waiting.

Then, so close at hand that I almost cried out

in my surprise, I heard the clink of bottles, followed by a tremendous crash of splintered glass. I heard someone plunging through the undergrowth towards me. The huge figure of a man rushed past me, shouting and singing at the top of his voice, waving a bottle high above his head. He missed me by a few yards. My first instinct was to shout to him to stop there and then. But I decided rapidly it would be better to tackle him out on the road which he was making for. I knew at once what was wrong.

Fire-water!

That's what they call whisky up in the North-West. Most of the States were dry up there then, but even in the "wet" ones, whisky is a forbidden drink for Indians and half-breeds. But it is a drink they will sell their souls for. And it is a drink that sends them mad, puts the devil into them!

I followed the man on to the road. He stopped shouting suddenly when he saw Paddy. Then he heard me coming and spun round to face me. He was a "breed" (half-breed); he looked about six-foot five or six; his eyes were bloodshot and rimmed with red; his thick lips were slimy. He stared at me, first in slow wonder, then as it dawned on him that I was a Mounted man, in contempt. His lip curled. He tried to draw himself up straight but staggered. He was very drunk. He still clutched the big, empty bottle of whisky in his hand. From the sound of smashing I had heard a few seconds before I deduced that two other bottles of whisky had gone the same way that this one had. Three bottles of raw spirit

inside him! Enough to knock out any ordinary man, enough, anyway, to make him reeling drunk; but enough to send a "breed" stark, staring mad!

He spoke.

"You know me, eh?"

I ignored his remark.

"I don't want any fooling," I said. "I've got a gun here, and I'm not a bad shot. When I want to hit a man, I hit him. You've been drinking, and you're coming along with me to barracks. And it'll sure be a better thing for you if you come quietly."

A Mounted man can't fire unless he is attacked. The "breed" knew that as well as I did. It was darn foolish to have mentioned a gun at all. He stood towering above me, a terrifying, disgusting figure. And then he repeated his remark.

"You know me, eh?"

Then suddenly I knew that I did know him. By repute, anyway. He was known by the unflattering name of Sweaty Morland. He was the most notorious "breed" in the district. He sweated profusely, I had been told: hence his name. I glanced up at him. Great balls of sweat were rolling from his forehead past his glaring madman's eyes. They made little channels each side of his nose. Yes, it was Sweaty all right. And suddenly I was filled with a desire to bring the man to justice. It would be a grand scoop. My first capture—Sweaty Morland!

He started swearing violently and disgustingly. He was abusing the Force in the most filthy language

he could muster. He clenched his fist and shook it at me. He went purple in the face. He leapt up and down in a frenzy. His hands and face were clammy with sweat. . . .

I was helpless. I could not fire. If I grappled with him I wouldn't have a chance. I could only wait in the hope that he would calm down, and I could somehow get the handcuffs on him. I realised afterwards that I should really have dashed for my horse and ridden at top speed for barracks, collected up some of the men and set off after Sweaty in an organised search, for the man was likely to remain drunk for a considerable time and, in that condition, might do serious damage. And anyway it was necessary to find out where he had got his supply of "fire-water" from.

That was the sensible course, for barracks were not far away. But I didn't take the sensible course. I wanted to get Sweaty by myself—a wild, impossible notion.

I backed away a little from his onslaught of words and he moved towards me threateningly.

"Stop, or I'll fire!" I yelled.

But I had never fired point-blank at a man in those days and I didn't much like the idea of it.

Yet, if it was a question of his life or mine. . . .

But he was too quick for me. With a wild shriek he brought the bottle down with a crash on to my head.

I felt an agonising splitting pain. . . . The sky seemed to reel down on top of me. . . . The

earth heaved. . . . I caught a glimpse of Sweaty's hideous perspiring face grinning at me. . . . His bloodshot eyes flashed and flickered, grew enormously large, then faded away till they were little pig's eyes. . . . A great gulf swallowed everything up. . . . Everything faded away. . . . I heard a faint whinny from Paddy . . . and then the blackness enfolded everything, muffling even the sound of Sweaty's heavy breathing and the sight of his wicked bloodshot eyes. . . .

III

Paddy was still standing beside me when I recovered consciousness. My head felt as if it were being pierced by red-hot needles. My legs were like great lumps of lead. I put up my hand to my forehead and when I looked at it I saw that it was smeared with blood. I started picking bits of glass out of my hair and out of my flesh. I tied a handkerchief round my forehead and staggered to my feet. I felt very ill.

Suddenly it occurred to me that Sweaty might still be lurking near. The thought wasn't a pleasant one. I didn't feel in the least inclined for a hand-to-hand fight with the giant half-breed in my present condition. I mounted Paddy with difficulty and let him take me back to the barracks. I wanted to get back as quickly as I possibly could, but I simply hadn't the energy to urge the horse on. I just sat, in a kind of a doze, and hoped that Paddy would shift, and that Sweaty wasn't lurking by the side of

the road to smash any more bottles over my head!

When I got to the barracks I felt decidedly better. "Pudding" West was the first man I saw—one of the "characters" at Indian Head and reputed to be the fattest man in the force.

His round, innocent, childlike eyes, that were so famous at the station, stared at me in amazement as I rode up with a bloody handkerchief round my forehead and glass and blood all over my head and face.

"Oh, Bobby lad, what have you been a-doing of?" His squeaky voice greeted me.

"Sweaty Morland bashed my head with a bottle," I answered briefly.

Pudding's bantering tone annoyed me. I didn't realise then, as I did afterwards, that though outwardly he said ridiculous things and behaved in a ridiculous way, he was in actual fact one of the finest Mounted Policemen in the Force.

"Bottle?" he squeaked, his eyes goggling.

"Yep. Fire-water."

"What a naughty man that Sweaty is!" (I am not exaggerating. Pudding really did talk like this).

"When I've got my head seen to," I said, "I'm going out after that stinking 'breed' and I won't rest till I've got him. I shall want some of the guys here to come with me. It's a pity, though, I kinda wanted to rope that 'breed' in by myself."

Pudding became suddenly serious. His eyes glinted.

"I'll come with you, Bob," he said. "Just you and I. No one else. We'll get him by ourselves."

"Do you think we can?" I said doubtfully. "He's in a vile mood. He looked like the Devil himself just before he bashed me with the bottle."

"*Do I think we can? Do I?*" repeated Pudding in tones of such infinite scorn that I agreed to his suggestion at once. It was a good suggestion, anyway.

I got my head dressed in a rough sort of way. I took a swig of spirit to steady my nerves, for I was still feeling far from well.

Then Pudding and I set off.

We enquired at various saloons, and at favourite haunts of his, if Sweaty had lately been seen. But we could get no information. He hadn't been seen all day, was the reply they all gave. Whether it was fear of Sweaty or whether it was true we didn't know, but we could get nothing more out of any of them. I suggested going to search the Bush near where I had been attacked to see if he was still there. It was possible, I thought, that he had completely succumbed to the effects of the drink and was lying prostrate somewhere in the Bush. But Pudding didn't think so.

"It would take more than three bottles of raw spirit to knock that guy out," he remarked, cheerfully.

And, after all, Pudding ought to have known; he had had trouble with Sweaty before.

We thought we'd try a saloon on the very outskirts of the town. Sweaty didn't as a rule go there, but

Pudding thought it was worth trying. As we drew near to the saloon we realised that there was trouble going on inside. Loud shouts and singing and uproarious cries were coming from the place.

"Sweaty's there," Pudding muttered briefly.

"Shouldn't be surprised."

"He's there. I'm sure of it."

Pudding was right, as he usually was.

As we drew nearer to the place the noise became quite deafening and we heard Sweaty's unmistakable tones above the din. I felt I wanted to knock Sweaty out as he'd done to me, but I didn't see how I was going to do it. Suddenly I had a plan. I suggested it to Pudding and he agreed that it was a good one.

"We'll try it on, anyway," he said. "It might work."

"It will. I'm sure of it," I answered, mimicking his tone of voice.

Pudding squeaked with merriment. He looked like a cheery well-fed little stockbroker. Not in the least like a North-West Mounted Policeman intent on bringing an evil-doer to justice.

Our scheme worked.

Pudding and I dismounted behind the building. Then Pudding went in and I waited outside just behind the door. I had a heavy strut of wood in my hand. I had only one aim in mind at that moment, and that was to make Sweaty see a few stars, though I'd have liked it better if he could have seen his own horrible bloodshot eyes dancing

and flickering, as I had done just before I lost consciousness.

I heard Pudding asking the landlord if Sweaty was inside.

"He sure is."

"And making a nuisance of himself?"

"You're right."

"Just tell him there's a guy out here would like to have a word with him."

I heard nothing for a moment and then I saw the landlord come out of the inner room shrugging his shoulders.

Then Pudding went in. A bellow of rage from inside told me that Pudding's red tunic had done its work. Then Pudding came running out, as we had planned, squeaking in alarm. Sweaty came pounding after him. I stood with my weapon raised. . . .

I felled that "breed" like an ox. He fell writhing to the ground, his eyes rolling hideously. I stared down at him in disgust while Pudding put the handcuffs on him. In his pain and fear he showed only the whites of his eyes—only I shouldn't say "whites"; they weren't white, they were yellow streaked with blood.

It was only when we were riding back to barracks, with Sweaty propped up on Pudding's mount, that I realised I was still feeling ill. My head was reeling. And, apart from my head, I now began to feel as if every bone in my body was bruised or broken. My thighs and shins were agony to touch.

It wasn't till later that I discovered that, though no bones were broken, practically the whole of my body was covered with terrible bruises. At first I couldn't understand how this had occurred. The doctor suggested that my horse had trampled on me or kicked me as I lay unconscious. I knew Paddy too well to agree to that suggestion. Then the right one occurred to me.

"I reckon the 'breed' did it," I said slowly, "It's the sort of dirty thing he is capable of—kicking a man when he's down."

Sweaty confessed to doing this later on, but pleaded that he was so drunk he didn't know what he was doing.

Well, that was the end of my first little excitement as a Mounted Policeman. The doctor who attended me at Indian Head said that I must return to Regina for light duties for some months. I was furious when I first heard this, but then I thought of little Molly Cornish, and decided it wasn't such a bad plan after all. I was a bit worried about Molly, as a matter of fact, as I hadn't heard from her. I had fulfilled my part of the bargain for the first few weeks, but when I got no replies to my messages I gave up writing. There can't be anything the matter with her, I told myself; otherwise I should have heard something from her people. All the same, I was glad of the opportunity of seeing her again and persuading her that I was as constant as ever.

So I returned to Regina in June, 1908, after

only four months at Indian Head, and with only one incident of any interest to recount to Jim.

Jim looked a bit worried, I thought, when I greeted him.

"It's good to see you again," I said.

"Yes," he answered, "I didn't think I should see your back again so soon. What have you been doing to get yourself mucked about like that, you old fool?"

We chatted for a bit and then I asked him the question I had been wanting to ask since I first saw him.

"How's Molly?"

His face fell.

"Oh, haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?" I rapped out.

"Oh, she's— They ought to have told you. I can't understand. . . ."

"What's wrong? Is she ill?"

"No, no. She's not ill. She's— Well, she's disappeared."

"Disappeared?"

Jim nodded his head miserably.

"But she can't have disappeared! It's absurd! What happened? Tell me!"

"She went about a couple of months ago. They can't find any trace of her. She left a note saying she had been offered a job; she didn't say where. And she just vanished. No one knew anything about it. She didn't go by train. She must have got a lift in a waggon or buggy, or else she ran off with

someone. But if she did that it must have been a stranger to Regina and not anyone she had known for long."

I was staggered by this terrible news. It seemed impossible that she should have vanished into thin air.

"But have they heard nothing of her at all since then?"

"Nothing. Old Cornish has offered big rewards for news of her. But nothing has turned up. It's a complete mystery."

"As soon as I'm fit I must go down and see Cornish. There must be some solution."

"I don't know that I'd bother the old man," Jim said nervously.

"Why not?"

"Well, to tell the truth . . . I know it's absurd, but he thought for a long time that you had something to do with Molly's disappearance. He had someone specially sent up to Indian Head to prowl around and see if any news of her could be found up there."

I was furious at this news, but then I saw it was no use getting angry.

"Well, Jim," I said, "I wish I'd never come back to Regina. This is the worst shock I've ever had in my life."

Later I went down to see old Cornish and made my peace with him. But nothing more was heard of Molly, and after what Jim had told me, I didn't really think that it would. Once again she had acted on the impulse of the moment. Of that I was

sure. And whatever she had done with herself I felt sure that she was bitterly repenting it now.

I make no apology for digressing to tell this story of Molly Cornish, for it is to crop up again later, and the whole story always strikes me as being one of the most extraordinary in my experience, especially now that I can look back on it quite dispassionately and without any personal feeling. But more of this in due course.

I stayed three months in Regina, and towards the end of my time there I had one small excitement which is, I think, worth recording.

I was looking after a gang of eight prisoners when one of them suddenly made a dive for liberty. It would have been easy to have taken a shot at his legs and brought him down, but this is not allowed.

"No gun, unless attacked," is a maxim of the Force, and one that is very strictly adhered to. That is why they make such a point, when training recruits, of teaching them to be as quick as lightning-on the draw, for when you can't shoot until you see the other man is about to shoot you, it is just a question of who can draw the quickest!

I glanced quickly at my prisoners and saw that they were all a good, trustworthy lot.

"Come on, all of you!" I shouted to them. "We've got to get that man!"

We got him—after a pretty long chase. He was a young fellow and I'd always quite liked him. I forget what he'd been imprisoned for—nothing very much, I know.

We got him back again, and then I realised that no one had seen our little comedy.

The man implored me to overlook the matter this time. It was the first time he'd ever attempted to get away, he said, and it would be his last. He'd just got an attack of nerves and didn't realise what he was doing.

I saw he meant what he said.

"Look here, boys," I said, "this little episode is just between yourselves and me. Nobody else knows anything about it. There'll be trouble if anyone does know. See? That's all."

So no one ever knew that there'd been an attempted escape by one of the prisoners at Regina that afternoon.

I mention this just to show that the Force realised that clemency was sometimes more desirable than harsh methods (for I wasn't the only man in the Force who'd done that sort of thing, by any means). Sometimes I've read books that make out the North-West Mounted to be nothing but a grim example of unyielding iron discipline. It isn't true.

When I went back to Indian Head Jim came with me. I was glad of that, for I had been rather afraid that Jim and I were going to get separated for good. A pal of his, an ugly, good-natured American, was sent up to the Indian Head station at the same time. I shall never forget Jim introducing him to me.

"Meet Jackie Rutherford!" Jim announced airily.

I turned round and faced the ugliest man I've ever met in my life. I was quite taken aback, and, never very good at disguising my feelings, stared point-blank at him.

"Sure, I'm ugly!" Jackie said with a huge grin that seemed to stretch from ear to ear. "Does it worry you?"

Jackie really was ugly, but he was one of the pleasantest men I've ever had the good fortune to meet. He'd do anything for a pal, and he'd never bear a grudge against his bitterest enemy. He was entirely unselfish.

I said a little while ago that first impressions were rotten bad things to go by. I'd like to expand that statement now and say that *any* impressions are bad if they are formed by outward appearances. Jackie had a squashed kind of a nose; you could hardly call it a nose at all. His eyes (so he always said) were the best part of him; yet they were watery and fishlike. There was nothing attractive about his outward appearance at all; yet he had the kindest and most loyal nature of any man I ever knew.

I arrived back at Indian Head with Jim and Jackie in September. Barely a week after I got back I ran into my second slice of trouble.

CHAPTER III

DANCE OF DEATH

I

I WAS out on patrol some distance from Indian Head when I heard of trouble a little way ahead. It's surprising the way news travels in those parts; more surprising still in the lonely frozen North where it seems to travel just as quickly as in the more civilised districts. The man who gave me the information was a miner, a bleary-eyed unprepossessing individual. He stopped me as I was riding through a little mining village, a village that consisted solely of a few tumble-down, squalid dwellings in which the miners lived.

When I stopped he came up to me with a wink and cocked a dirty thumb over his shoulder.

"Lookin' for trouble?"

"What's the matter?" I asked him quietly.

"Notice anything queer about the village?"

"No, I can't say I've noticed anything."

He guffawed loudly and spat on the ground with relish.

"Waal," he drawled, "I reckon you p'licemen are a poor lot."

I was getting impatient.

"If you've got anything to tell me," I said shortly, "spout it out. If you haven't you'd better clear off and mighty quick too."

He looked at me nastily.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah."

Then he grinned.

"All right, Mr. P'liceman," he said. "I'll tell you. It's no good us quarrelling. I guess you and I are the only men left in this little hole."

Involuntarily I glanced around at the cluster of hut-like houses. There were a couple of women scraping pots outside their dwellings. Otherwise no sign of life. The man seemed to be right; we were, as far as I could see, the only men there.

He continued: "There's been a quack doctor here. Doc Morton he's called. He's been selling patent medicine, and giving watches away with it. They're all dud; so's the dope. I knew it from the start, but when I told the boys they got nasty, so I left them to it. He made a nice packet out of 'em, that Doc did. Then he cleared in the night. In the morning the boys realised they'd been had. The watches wouldn't go properly, an' they found they all had the same dope though they all had different complaints! It makes me laugh!"

The miner spat again emphatically.

"Where've they all gone?" I asked. "After the doctor?"

He nodded.

"Yeah, that's it. An' I reckon there'll be trouble. Thought I'd just tell you."

His voice was casual, but I could see he hoped there would be trouble. I'd already summed him

up. He obviously wasn't popular with the rest of the miners (he was certainly a nasty specimen) and, as he appeared to be the only man not to be taken in by the "doctor," he was probably still less popular on that account. Here was his chance of getting his own back on the miners who had no doubt given him a bad time.

He glanced round furtively and then shielding his mouth with his hand, whispered something to me. This confirmed what I thought. He had told me that the miners were all drunk. This was not unlikely; they had probably been attempting to drown their sorrow! But it made me quite certain that my informer was only too anxious for me to make a few arrests. Mentally I decided to avoid doing so if I possibly could.

The "doctor," the miner thought, belonged to a travelling fair and circus and had come over from a larger village about eight miles away. No doubt he had gone back there. Anyway, that was the spot the boys were making for.

With a curt nod I thanked him for his information and kicked Paddy into a smart trot. The man seemed irritated by my abrupt departure, but when I turned round in the saddle a second or two later I saw that he was rubbing his hands together in pleased anticipation of the fate he thought was about to descend on the heads of his comrades.

Things were looking very bad for the "doctor" when I arrived. The fair was not a large one and the centre of attraction was the doctor's patent-

medicine stall. There was a large crowd round it; most of them appeared to be carrying sticks or weapons of some sort. They were shouting abusive language at the doctor but he stood quite still with folded arms on his little platform. He was smiling. I was astonished at the audacity of the man. I could see at a glance that he only infuriated the miners all the more by appearing unconcerned. It looked to me as if they meant business, though for the present they seemed content to abuse and threaten him. Most of the miners appeared to be drunk, though the rest of the mob was made up of harmless folk who had come along to see the fun.

They scattered a bit when I cantered up on my horse.

"What's all this about?" I demanded.

For a second there was silence, but only for a second. Then the hullabaloo broke out again more fiercely than before. The miners were drunk—there was no doubt about that—and in that condition none of them had any respect for the Law. The miners were mostly a tough lot round that district but they were a law-abiding, good-hearted crowd as a rule; it was only because they were drunk that they were uncontrollable.

The noise was deafening. At any moment I expected the enraged men to break down the "doctor's" stall and attack him.

"Give us back our money!" they were shouting.

"Dirty thief!"

"Son of a gun! Let me get at 'im!"

"Burn up his palace! Haw! Haw!"

And a number of unrepeatable but colourful phrases besides.

Their menacing attitude increased. Somehow I must save that man from their folly. If I could only get him away somehow. . . . But I would never be able to persuade him to leave his belongings behind. And how get him away, if I could persuade him?

The circus was pitched a little way outside the village so that if only I could get hold of a horse for him he could make for open country and be well away before the miners had realised he had escaped. Then I had an idea.

I dismounted, tethered Paddy, and went behind the scenes of the Doc's stall. Then I made my way through to the front and mounted the platform beside him.

He turned to me and shrugged his shoulders.

The shouting and roaring increased in volume, but they did not dare to throw things while I was beside him.

"Beat it!" I said to him curtly. "It's madness to stay here."

"They'll wreck my stall if I go, and it's my only means of livelihood."

This was unanswerable.

"Well, if you won't do what I say, I can't help you," I said and turning my back on him, began to make my way out again.

As soon as the mob saw me going they started throwing dirt and stones and other missiles at the unfortunate "doctor." I heard him cry out as a heavy object hit him in the face. Then he ran after me.

"I must get away! You're plumb right! They'll murder me, the hounds!" He shook his fist at them.

"Now, look here," I said to him roughly, "you understand, I'm helping you to get away because I think they might kill you if I didn't. But I still think you're a dirty trickster!"

He did not reply.

"If you give them back their money it might be all right even now," I went on, "but I doubt it. They want your blood."

"I won't part with a dime," he said obstinately.

We heard the sound of splitting woodwork as they started breaking through in front. At the sound the Doc's nerve broke.

"Get me away somehow!" he wailed. "Get me away from the devils!"

Paddy was tethered at the back of the stall, out of sight of the mob. I untethered him and almost pushed the doctor into the saddle.

"I'm trusting you," I said quietly, "to ride this horse no more than a couple of miles. Then leave him. He'll come back again, and you'll be a safe distance away. Can I trust you?"

"Sure."

He was off in a flash. I hurried back to the front of the stall. Some of the men were about to climb

up on to the platform. The platform was thick with dirt and stones. When they saw me they fell back.

I tried to reason with them. I told them that the Doc had gone behind to get his money and would no doubt be back again in a moment to repay them. But repayment didn't seem to interest them.

"We want the Doc!" they yelled.

But they dared not do much while I was standing there. Even in their drunkenness they recognised the red tunic and respected it.

The rest of the crowd had dwindled when they thought there was going to be trouble, and only the miners remained. So now I only had drunken men to deal with. If they had been sober I could not have got away with my little trick. They would at once have suspected a ruse when the Doc and I disappeared behind the scenes. But apparently it did not occur to them that he could have escaped. They knew he had no horse near the stall and the notion that I might part with my horse was too incredible to enter their minds. Mind you, I could not have done it with any other horse; but I was convinced that Paddy would return to me, as he always did.

I could see that I was rapidly losing control over the miners, and I was thankful when I heard a familiar whinny from behind me. I dashed out of the stall and mounted my horse who seemed none the worse for his hard ride.

Then I cantered round to the front of the stall to see what was happening.

The miners had already broken in. They were smashing everything they could lay their hands on. Watches, bottles, everything that belonged to the "doctor's" precious medicine-chest were flung to the ground and trampled on. I made no attempt to stop them. I knew that it would be useless.

Then the cry went up: "Where's the Doc?" They searched the little room at the back of the stall, they hunted around everywhere. Then they came back and stared suspiciously at me.

I just sat silently and grimly on my horse, staring back at them. They muttered sullenly, knowing that somehow I had managed to get the doctor away. Then they turned back with added zest to their destruction. My faith in the power of my red tunic was justified. They dared not attack a Mounted Policeman. Besides they knew my gun contained bullets that would kill!

Having smashed up everything they could lay their hands on, they set the place ablaze. Crowds gathered round again when the flames shot skywards, and then I thought it was time I took my departure. It was useless to take any action against these miners. At best I could only arrest one or two. Besides I was not over-anxious to arrest any of them. The "doctor" had got what he deserved, and anyway I wasn't keen on gratifying the desire of my unpleasant informer of some hours ago.

It seemed to me that I'd done all that I could have been expected to do. The "doctor" was the one who had come off worst, and that was as it

should be, for his was the crime in the first place. At the same time, I had saved him from a severe lynching in which he might well have been killed, for that bunch of drunken enraged toughs were capable of anything.

I returned to barracks that night with the satisfactory feeling of a day's work well done.

II

If I were to tell you everything that happened to me during my years in the North-West Mounted, this book would never end. So I am trying to pick out the incidents that would interest the ordinary man who has never been to this part of the world, and who would like to know something about the Mounted Policeman and his activities. This isn't very easy to do, for incidents that seem insignificant to me (having been almost an everyday occurrence while I was in the Force) would perhaps appear strange and unusual to the reader.

There were the prairie fires, for instance. The systematic and organised attacks upon these fires were almost always controlled by the Mounted Police. It was one of our most regular and commonplace duties; though the fires themselves were often terrifying and exciting enough. We had the right to order anyone to come and assist in fire-fighting, and if a man refused he could be summoned. It wasn't often that this happened, for none of them could ever be certain that their own farms and dwellings were not going to be in danger. Once a prairie fire gets a big hold

it needs all the men and the energy and the brain-power that can be mustered to get it under control.

Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan: these are the three prairie provinces. The prairie consists of long tracts of treeless grassland, broken by stretches of low scrub which is the Bush. The fire spreads at a tremendous and fearful rate; it cannot burn upwards, for even in the Bush there is nothing of any height to burn, and the flames lick their way over the prairie at a pace that must seem incredible to anyone who has not witnessed the sight.

When the men are called out for fire-fighting they bring with them wet sacks and spades. The wet sacks to smother the flames, the spades to dig wide trenches to stop the fire from spreading any further.

It is an alarming experience, fighting a prairie fire for the first time, but, like everything else, you get used to it in a remarkably short time, until it seems nothing out of the ordinary. It is very curious the way one gets used to things. What a trite and commonplace remark! But a very true one nevertheless. Man's adaptability never ceases to amaze me. I thought when I first went North, early in 1912, that I could never get accustomed to the intense cold, but within a few weeks I was surprised that the cold had ever worried me.

While I am talking about ordinary duties I might as well mention the Game Laws. It was our duty to see that these were kept. There was a good deal of poaching on fishing preserves. Apart from fishing, the Game Laws consisted chiefly of protection at

certain times of the year for musk-rats (whose valuable fur led to their introduction into Central Europe and Great Britain, which countries have been trying to get rid of them ever since on account of the damage they do to waterways) and raccoons (funny fat little creatures with broad heads and pointed muzzles) and the lovely black and white silver-fox.

The policeman who arrested a man for breaking the Game Laws was entitled to half the fine, and the game too if he wanted it. But this kind of work, like fighting prairie fires, was commonplace, and nothing exciting ever happened (to me, at any rate) in connection with it.

Jackie and Jim and I and Pudding were all great pals at Indian Head. We were a merry crowd, and for sheer good company I think that year when we were all together was the best I've had in my life. Pudding, rolling his round innocent eyes, and making preposterous remarks in his high, squeaky tones; Jim, always good company anywhere, with no striking characteristics (except his good looks) but always gay and high-spirited; and old Jackie, whom I liked more and more as I got to know him better, an ugly, sincere, courageous man with a genius for wisecracks (I wish I could remember some of them, but I daresay they'd mostly be unprintable!)

Yes, we made a cheerful, and I think quite formidable group, the four of us. When I look back on my years in the North-West Mounted, these are the days that I remember with most regret. We seldom

had adventures together, however, for we usually went out on lone patrol. I know that most of my adventures, anyway, happened when I was alone; and therefore, since this book is a chronicle of the adventures that happened to me, I can't give as much space as I would have liked to Pudding and my other pals.

In the early summer of 1909 I was on patrol by myself when I suddenly caught sight of a cloud of dust some miles away across the prairie. This was no uncommon sight, but what attracted my attention was the fact that the cloud of dust was becoming larger and larger and seemed to be coming towards me with amazing speed. I drew rein and sat for a moment on my horse, watching. As the cloud of dust came nearer and nearer I realised that it was a buggy, with a team of horses, being driven (as I thought) extremely dangerously and recklessly at the gallop in my direction.

Then, as the buggy drew almost level with me and I could see the horses foaming at the mouth and straining wildly forward, I saw to my horror that *the only occupant of the buggy was a young girl who had not the slightest control over the madly-galloping team of horses!* I only had time for a quick glance and then the buggy, rocking dangerously from side to side, had flown past. The girl looked very young. Her hair streamed behind her and her face looked white and pinched with terror. She shrieked something at me as the buggy rocked past, but what she said I could not tell.

I had to act quickly. At any moment the buggy might overturn. I kicked Paddy into a gallop and gave chase.

The North-West Mounted were not issued with lassos, but they could be used by the constables if they cared to provide themselves with them. I had done this at Regina in the very early days, for as a boy I had imagined that it was an essential part of a constable's equipment, and I did not like to think of myself without one. It wasn't often I had an opportunity of putting it into use, but on this occasion I blessed my stars that I had it with me.

I drew level with the buggy again. The girl was making gallant efforts to pull the horses up and was hanging on to the reins with all her might. I tried to get round to the front of the buggy but the team swerved away, and the girl screamed as the buggy nearly overturned. It was then I decided that the only thing to do was to use my lasso, though there was a grave risk of the buggy overturning if I did so.

I rode dead level with it for a moment awaiting my opportunity. Then I whirled the lasso above my head and sent it flying towards the offside horse. At that critical moment the team swerved again and the lasso missed by a long mark. I cursed and raced level again. The horses were getting more and more scared. If I didn't stop them soon—

Again I whirled the lasso and sent it flying. This time I got the offside horse by the foreleg, bringing it down with a bang. The buggy lurched and twisted, but to my great relief it did not turn over. The girl

leapt out, not hurt at all, without a bruise or a scratch on her, but she was still shaking after the alarming experience she had been through.

"Oh, how can I thank you!" she burst out. "I thought I'd seen my last hour then."

"Don't thank me," I said. "It was just a stroke of luck that I managed to stop the buggy without turning it over."

And so it was. Nine times out of ten, I believe the buggy would have gone over. But as I told you, luck is one of the most important elements in the make-up of a successful Mounted Policeman. Even the horse I had lassoed was not hurt, although he had come a terrible cropper.

I fastened Paddy on to the back of the buggy, and got into it with the girl at my side, and drove her home. She was the daughter of a pretty big man in the cattle line. When I got back he thanked me profusely for what I'd done. He gave me a good dinner and was anxious to reward me in a more substantial way, but I refused to let him.

"Well, son," he said, as I left him that evening, "if there were more men like you, this country would be a better place than it is. If ever you leave the Force there'll always be a job waiting for you here."

I put this down for what it's worth, and not because I am specially proud of what I did. Any Mounted Policeman would have done the same, but not all of them, perhaps, would have been favoured with such good luck!

III

Not far from the Indian Head station there was a Government Indian Reservation occupied both by full-blooded Indians and half-breeds ("breeds" as we used to call them). Only a few days after the incident I have just described a report was received to the effect that there was a great deal of unrest there.

The big cattle-owner, father of the girl whom I had saved, had written to an officer in charge of the Indian Head station telling him of what I had done and sending the cheque that I had already once refused. The officer was impressed by what I had done, because, I suppose I was a young constable and still pretty raw, and I think it was on account of this that he gave me the job of investigating the trouble over at the Reservation. He saw I was desperately keen. So were all of us, for that matter, but perhaps I showed it more than the others. Anyway, I was detailed to carry out a thorough investigation of the cause of the unrest, and accordingly I set out on Paddy early next morning.

I arrived at the Reservation about ten o'clock. There was a lot of singing and dancing going on, interrupted every now and again by ear-splitting yells. I enquired of some of the more sober-looking Indians what the matter was. But I couldn't get a word out of them. There is no more difficult job in the world than trying to get information out of an Indian who doesn't want to give it. He just

grunts in reply, and his face remains absolutely inscrutable. It is impossible to tell what he is thinking or whether he is disturbed by your questions, or in fact anything at all.

I felt thoroughly irritable by the time I'd finished questioning them, for I'd got no further than when I'd first arrived. In exasperation I tethered Paddy, and began to make a thorough search of the wigwams. I did this because I was pretty certain that drink was at the bottom of the trouble and probably "fire-water," for whisky is the one drink they crave for and would go to any lengths to get hold of.

I had spent a long time searching and was beginning to think that I would never find anything, when I suddenly came across a half-bottle hidden away in a corner of one of the wigwams. This confirmed my belief, and the next thing to find out was who was responsible for getting the stuff into the Reservation.

Then I began my questioning again. Confronted with the evidence of the bottle I held in my hand they at last stopped their monotonous and irritating grunts and admitted that, unknown to their chief (at the head of the Reservation was an Indian Chief, a fine old character, and it was to him that I had gone first to tell him that I was making investigations), a quantity of "fire-water" had been smuggled in. But more than that they would not say, and I gave up the unequal contest without making much effort. I was sick of listening to their grunting!

It was then that I remembered a notorious "breed" who had been suspected on other occasions of getting

drink into the Reservation. He was a curious character, very intelligent and could speak almost perfect English, but he was a bad man to have in an Indian Reservation for he had a lot of European blood (of the worst sort) in his veins.

I asked where he was, but no one seemed to know. Eventually I received the reply that he was away from the Reservation and would not be back for some hours. It was now getting well on into the middle of the day, and I had been there about four hours, but I decided I could not return without getting more definite information. Besides, the dancing and shrieking was going on all the time, and indeed seemed to be gathering strength, which looked as though they were still drinking steadily from some unknown supply.

"I shall remain," I said, "until he returns."

They made no answer but looked at me steadily with the cold blank stare that only an Indian can produce and which has an unpleasant effect even on the most unimaginative people. It seemed to me that they were saying silently: "*You dare wait here!*"

For the next hour or so I walked about the Reservation. There was pandemonium everywhere. There was no doubt that most of them had been drinking heavily. They were dancing and chanting, and sometimes uttering blood-curdling yells that made me shiver. Some of them cast sullen glances in my direction, but for the most part they took no notice of me at all. This was definitely disturbing, for as a general rule the Indian had a great respect for

the "red serge of the Great White Queen" as he called it. It was nine years since the death of Queen Victoria yet they still talked of the Great White Queen, and still do, for all I know, to-day. But, as I mentioned when I was telling you the story of my fight with Sweaty Morland, "fire-water" makes an Indian lose his senses. He becomes, more often than not, aggressively drunk, and it is unwise to rub him up the wrong way when he is in that condition. I should have realised this and returned to Indian Head, content with what little I had discovered. But I wanted to get hold of this "breed," who I was certain was at the bottom of the trouble, and, truth to tell, I was anxious to get the whole matter cleared up by myself so that I could return with another feather in my cap. This folly very nearly cost me my life and gave me the worst scare I ever had.

I suspected the "breed" was in the Reservation all the time. The Indians I had spoken to, though apparently quite sober and possibly disapproving the revels that were going on, would never give away a fellow member of the Reservation even if he is only a "breed." It was the same with the Chief. One could never get anything out of him that would incriminate anyone belonging to the Reservation he was in charge of, and yet as a rule he kept an iron control over them and there was seldom any trouble up there.

One bunch of Indians and "breeds" I noticed were making even more noise than the rest with their

singing and shouting. I went over to investigate, and there I saw, in the middle of the group, the "breed" I had been looking for. I went straight up to him and asked him point-blank where he had got the "fire-water" from. My shot went home. He stared at me open-mouthed for a moment, and the little group around him were sullenly silent. He shrugged his shoulders hesitantly, timidly, and his face changed expressions with such rapidity that it would have been amusing if the occasion had not been so serious. Then he suddenly got control of himself and laughed loudly.

"Mc get 'fire-water'? That is funny. That is very funny."

He turned back to the others, but I was not going to be out-done, and I questioned him sharply again. For a long time I could get no satisfactory reply from him, but at last he admitted that he had got the drink from a prospector in exchange for skins. While he was giving me this information I saw out of the corner of my eye that the drunken group had silently formed itself into a circle around me. I pretended not to notice, but I felt a sinking feeling deep down inside me. There was some whispering going on behind me, some muttering, ominous and menacing.

I determined to get out of the Reservation as soon as possible for I remembered with an unpleasant pang that a drunken Indian often reverts to primitive desires and customs, and satisfies them, too, if the opportunity is given to him. . . .

But I knew that at all costs I mustn't show my foreboding. Just as a savage dog will bite a timid stranger and not a fearless one, so I felt that as long as I could remain perfectly calm all would be well. But I was wrong. I had already been prowling around the Reservation too long. The drunken group around me set up a low kind of howling noise; a mournful sound, and one that made me wish I had left the Reservation hours ago before things had begun to look nasty.

I put away the notebook in which I had been jotting down what the "breed" told me and then I curtly asked two of the Indians to move out of the way so that I might pass through the group to get to my horse. They stared coldly at me and did not move. I tried to thrust them aside but they flung me back. Now I was really scared. An Indian must be very drunk before he will lay hands on a white man, and a constable of the North-West Mounted at that. Then I realised that the group had grown to alarming proportions. More and more Indians came to join the others and danced around me with a terrible, silent determination. Once again I tried to force my way through. Once again I was thrust unceremoniously back.

This is fantastic, I told myself; it can't really be happening. Indians don't behave like this. But then I told myself that it *was* happening, and that an Indian who is drunk on "fire-water" is capable of the most terrible acts, and that I had only myself to blame.

This wasn't very comforting. The silent dancing figures around me got on my nerves. I began to shout and rant at them, but they took not the slightest notice and continued their fantastic dancing. Then I realised that nothing I could say to them would do the slightest good, and I began to consider my best plan of action. I had my revolver and it might be possible to fire my way through them, but I had no sooner considered that idea than I rejected it. My revolver was absolutely useless to me, for I knew that as soon as I fired a shot the enraged Indians would fling themselves upon me and probably lynch me. There was no hope of escaping in that way. No, my only hope of escape was by using guile. I began to talk to them in a steady voice. I knew that most of them would understand at least part of what I said.

"I do not wish you any harm," I told them. "I am here because it is my duty to see that law and order is kept. I have found you drinking 'fire-water,' which is forbidden, but if you will let me go now I will say nothing of this matter. . . ."

In this level steady tone I spoke for many minutes, but I might as well have been speaking to a brick wall. There was no sign that they had heard me, and the moment I stopped speaking they started dancing and shouting and screeching in a kind of frenzy and pointing at the sun. It was late in the day. In a couple of hours it would be dark. At all costs I must get away from them before then.

The shrieks and caterwauling got louder and

louder until I held my hands to my ears. When I took them away, the shrieking had died down, and someone was speaking, slowly and deliberately. Over and over again the same phrase was uttered. I could understand a little of the language, but it was some minutes before I realised the significance of that monotonously-repeated phrase. The Indians kept staring at the sun and then at me, and it seemed to me that their eyes gleamed strangely. Then, in a flash, I understood that terrible phrase....

The earth swayed. . . . I heard the wild cries of the Indians and saw their dark gleaming bodies first above me and then below me. . . . I heard a hissing sound in my ears . . . the earth seemed to rise up and hit me in the face. . . . I slumped down on the ground, but I stayed conscious. . . . My brain felt soft and fuddled like cotton-wool. . . . But one hot searing thought stabbed through it like a needle. . . .

It was one hour from sunset, and at sunset I was to be murdered!

CHAPTER IV

TWO VERY STRANGE DENTISTS

I

My head cleared and I leapt to my feet quickly, for I realised suddenly the ludicrousness of my position. I cursed myself for my weakness in almost fainting. There was a new note of triumph in the wild cries of the Indians and I knew the reason why. It was because they had seen me at my weakest and knew now that they had me at their mercy. The native always over-estimates the power of a white man, and therefore as long as I could have kept cool and appeared unafraid, they would still have believed that in some way I had the better of them and that I was not really in their power. Now it was too late. They knew their strength, and as their fevered songs and dances grew louder, so their blood-lust grew greater, and I knew that there was no hope. I would be murdered by them in a brutal and savage manner, perhaps sacrificed according to some ancient pagan rite. . . .

Looking back upon that scene to-day I can hardly bring myself to believe that all this could ever really have happened. In all my experience of the Indians—and as a Mounted man I got to know them pretty well—I never encountered, or got to hear of, a

similar case. It was a known fact that the average Indian showed great respect for the Mounted men. I can only think that they must have had a simply unprecedented supply of whisky and had been drinking steadily for some days. I doubt if there was a sober man in the Reservation on that evening and I am certain that, if luck hadn't been on my side, they would have had an ugly murder to account for to the authorities the next day.

The minutes flashed by, and the sun sank lower and lower in the sky. Still the terrible dancing and shouting and screeching went on, and still I stood helpless in the middle of them. Every now and again I tried to force my way out but always I was thrust back.

I felt weak at the knees, and once again my head began to feel dizzy. It was an effort to keep myself upright. I knew that there were only a few more minutes to go. The dancing and prancing went on, but the screeches had died down to a deep monotonous chant that was even more eerie and terrifying.

For some reason my thoughts at this moment turned to Paddy, my horse. He was tethered not far away from where I was trapped. I wondered if the Indians had done anything to him. A ridiculous notion crossed my mind that he might have been cut loose and had cantered riderless back to the depot, in which case help from there might still arrive. But then I told myself that those sort of things never happen in real life, only in Wild West novels, and anyway I knew that Paddy always remained steadfastly where I left him. For the first

and last time in my life I cursed Paddy for his faithfulness. Then, when I thought I heard him whinny (for now that the dancing figures had stopped their screeching I could hear other sounds quite plainly), my last hope went and I abandoned myself to my fate. But I clutched my revolver tightly, determined to shoot a few of the devils in a last desperate bid for liberty.

A second or two later I heard Paddy whinny again and I wondered why he was doing it. Suddenly the Indians were silent. They stopped dancing and stood motionless. Again a whinny from Paddy.

It was dusk now. The hour of sunset had come. But nothing happened. The Indians stood like statues, listening. It was very strange. I listened too, and heard nothing, but evidently the Indians, who have a very acute sense of hearing, heard something they did not like, for they began to mutter uneasily amongst themselves.

Then, all at once, to my unutterable relief, half-a-dozen horses thundered up to us and rode straight for the Indians. In the dim light I could not see who was riding them; then I distinguished the familiar red jacket, and once again my head began to swim, but this time through sheer relief and joy. The Indians scattered wildly. One of the horses seemed to be coming straight for me, but the rider checked abruptly when he saw me. He leant out of the saddle and a strong arm helped me up behind him. It was only when we had started off again that I realised it was Jackie Rutherford, the cheerful, ugly little American.

"They nearly killed me," I whispered. I couldn't speak properly, for I was dead beat.

"Sure, it was a near thing," Jackie answered.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm taking you right back."

"But my horse. . .!"

He yelled to one of the other Mounted men:

"Bring Bob's horse back with you!"

"O.K."

We galloped out of the Reservation.

The five Mounted men who were left behind quietened things down a bit at the Reservation. There were some arrests made, and my information led to the arrest of the "breed" who appeared to be at the bottom of most of the trouble. I asked Jackie how they managed to get to the Reservation at such a critical moment.

"We'd been getting anxious about you for some hours," he answered, "and at last we got permission to come out and look for you. But as to why we arrived in the nick of time, waal"—he grinned broadly—"I guess that's just your usual luck."

My luck was rapidly becoming proverbial.

The next job I was on was not specially exciting but it was rather an enjoyable one because Jackie and Pudding were in on it as well, and because the two wrong 'uns we were after turned out to be two of the most charming men I have ever met! Complaints had been received at the depot of the unfair

treatment that had been meted out by the North-West Mounted to various inhabitants of a little town, some twenty miles from Indian Head. All the Mounted men at Indian Head were questioned but none of them could throw any light on the matter. None of us had been through the town recently and no news of any disturbances in that district had come to our notice.

A party, which consisted of the three of us—Jackie, Pudding and myself—was sent up to the town to investigate. The complaints had come from three different sources, so we split up and each of us went to interview a different man.

My man was small, red-faced and enormously fat. His nose indicated that he was fond of the bottle.

"Well," I said to him, "what's the trouble?"

"Waal, Mounie," he squeaked—he had a voice something like Pudding's—"it's just this. I like the Mounted men ver' much. They're good sports. I often say to my wife: 'Flora,' I say, 'you can always tell a Mounted man. There's something about a Mounted man——'"

I thought it was about time I stopped this eloquent but rather monotonous flow of words.

"If you like them as much as all that," I cut in, "what are you grouching about?"

"I was just coming to that," he returned in a reproachful high treble. "But I must start at the beginning, mustn't I?"

I made no reply; I was getting impatient.

"Out with it," I jerked briefly.

Suddenly he dropped his voice to a whisper and looked cautiously round, apparently to see if his wife was in hearing.

"I may as well tell you straight away," he said, "that I like a bit of drink now and again. And there are times—~~not~~ very often, mind you—but there are times when I take a drop too much."

Having relieved himself of this momentous confession, he allowed himself to speak in his normal high-pitched squeak again.

"This unfortunate occurrence—ahem—occurred on a certain night about two weeks ago. I had only taken a few sips when I felt a queer dizzy kind of feeling in my head and I decided I wanted to have a good fight with someone. . . ."

"You mean you got drunk," I said brutally. "Well, go on."

He tried to look insulted but, finding it rather difficult, abandoned the attempt and continued his long-winded yarn.

"I was arrested by two North-West Mounted men. Young fellows. Nice young fellows. All you Mounties are. But I didn't know they were Mounted men at first and I began to fight 'em."

"Why didn't you know they were Mounted men?"

"Well, you see, they belonged to the Plain-Clothes Section, and how was I to know? But I hadn't a word to say against them at that time. Nice young fellows they were."

I whistled to myself thoughtfully. That was

queer. There wasn't a plain-clothes section of the North-West Mounted. Impostors collecting fines?

"I suppose they fined you?" I queried.

"You're right. But I didn't mind that. Oh, no. Quite a small fine. Quite small. You wouldn't have had a complaint from me if that was all it was. But I had another little lapse about a week later and they copped me again. This time they arrested me and said they would have to take me back to the depot for being a public nuisance and that I would be imprisoned. That was terrible. My wife——"

He paused as if contemplating the frightfulness of it.

"Well?"

"I implored them to fine me again, but they said they couldn't do that. A little later one of them came to me and said that if I would pay him a hundred dollars he would let me go and no one would be any the wiser. It was sheer bribery, but I paid up. Then when I was free I wrote to the depot. I didn't like doing it. They were nice young fellows, but bribery is not a good thing."

"Are these men still in the town?" I asked.

"They were here yesterday," he answered.

I didn't wait to hear any more, for valuable time was being wasted. He had kept me a long time telling me his tale.

He hurried after me as I went towards the door.

"I shan't get taken to the depot, will I?" he asked furtively. "I'll pay any fine——"

"You've got nothing to fear," I assured him.

On comparing notes with Pudding and Jackie I found that the story I had got from my man was the same in many respects as theirs. There were obviously two men in the town pretending to belong to the plain-clothes section of the Mounted and reaping a rich harvest by arresting drunks and other mild evil-doers and either fining them or getting money for bribes.

Pudding had had definite information that the men were still in the town and had found out where they were staying, so the rest of our mission was easy.

We found the men just getting ready to leave the town. When they saw the game was up, they came with us quickly. Jackie clicked the handcuffs on them and then noticed to his discomfiture that one of them was staring at him long and earnestly. He pretended not to notice for some time, but after a bit it got on his nerves.

"Well, what are you looking at?" he rapped out.

"Say, buddy," drawled the youth—he was tall, nonchalant, and elegant-looking—"were you born with a face that shape or did you meet with an accident?"

Jackie, as he always did when anyone made remarks about his ugliness, howled with laughter. It was lucky for the youth that he had encountered such a good-natured man to try his wise-cracks on, otherwise he wouldn't have had such a good time on the journey back to Indian Head. As it was,

the youths proved to be the cheeriest of companions. No one would have guessed that they were our prisoners. They gave us a long list of all the people they'd collected fines or bribes from, and we found they had secured an enormous amount of money. The gullibility of the townsfolk was extraordinary.

"How long have you been doing these sort of jobs?" I asked one of them.

"This is the first time," he told me. "We started it as a joke, and when we found how well it worked we carried on. We were just packing up when you arrived. I guess we stayed just a day too long."

Neither of them seemed particularly worried at being captured, and I must say I felt quite sorry we had copped them. They were a pleasant pair of well-educated Americans and had fallen on bad times. I felt that their ingenuity deserved some credit, but I realised that that was not the kind of thing a model Mounted Policeman ought to think. It's a bad business when you start getting sympathetic with the crooks and tricksters you're supposed to be bringing to justice, but there was some excuse in this case for these were the most charming crooks I ever captured!

I told Pudding I was a bit sorry to bring them to justice and he just laughed.

"You're treating the matter more seriously than the crooks themselves," he said. "You see, Bob, the whole thing's just a game. There are as many gentlemen on the wrong side of the law as there are on the right side of it. If they get away with

it, good luck to 'em. If they don't, well, better luck next time. It ain't a bit of use feeling sorry for 'em when you do cop 'em however decent a crowd they may be."

Well, that was one way of looking at it.

I've told you of the time when I stopped a run-away buggy. Well, there was one other occasion while I was still in Saskatchewan when I had a similar experience. Towards the end of the summer of 1909 I was sent up to Moosejaw for a few weeks and this incident happened a few miles away from that town.

The weather was hot. Oh, yes the weather can be hot all right! A lot of people seem to forget that the weather in the prairie provinces is very cold in winter but often very hot in summer. It is a land of extremes. When it rains it rains like blazes! When it's hot it's very very hot, but when it's cold it's . . . no, not "horrid"—something a bit stronger than that! Anyway, it's very different from the Frozen North, where there is snow and ice all the year round, though even up there you get a lot of sunshine and a certain amount of warm weather—and if you're taken unawares you've got to be mighty careful not to get snow-blindness.

The Mounted Police always used to buy their hay for the horses from the Indians; it was conveyed in hay-waggons (or hay-racks, as they were called). One day I was ambling along on Paddy, feeling a bit bored for nothing exciting had come my way

for some time, when I saw a cloud of dust in the distance, and drew rein to see what was approaching me. This time, after my other experience with the runaway buggy, I was prepared and I soon saw that it was a waggon of some kind out of control.

As it drew closer I saw that it was a team of Indian ponies attached to a hay-rack containing a big load of hay. There was an Indian trying to control the ponies and at first I thought he was the only occupant. But as the "rack" came flying towards me I saw a squaw (probably his wife) holding in one arm her little papoose (baby) and clinging frantically to her husband with the other. Her face was transfixed with terror.

I got Paddy galloping before the waggon reached me. I knew that it would be impossible to lasso the ponies on this occasion without bringing the waggon down, or at any rate throwing the squaw out and almost certainly killing her baby. So I tried a more difficult and rather dangerous method.

For a moment or two I galloped level with the waggon and yelled to the terrified Indians that everything would be all right, though inside I felt that everything was all wrong! Just before I made my attempt to stop the madly-racing ponies I felt, for, I think, the first time in my life, an unpleasant spasm of funk. Just for a second I knew that I couldn't bring myself to do it. Just for a second, and then I knew that I could, and would! That was one of the worst seconds in my life. I shall never forget it. I have come up against dangers far more

imminent and far more terrifying than that many times since, but I never had that feeling again. From that day I was able to sympathise deeply—and I still can—with the man whose nerve fails him at the last crucial moment. My nerve nearly failed me on this occasion. I thank God that it didn't.

I plunged desperately half out of the saddle and flung out my arms to catch the reins of the nearside pony. I felt a wrench that seemed to tear my arms from their sockets but I set my teeth and clung on. The Indian yelled and his squaw screamed wildly. I heard a little piteous cry from her papoose. The Indian told me afterwards he was certain I would be killed.

Still I clung on with my knees gripping Paddy till my whole body seemed one huge ache. If Paddy had swerved outwards it would have meant instant death. I should have dropped at the feet of the galloping ponies and either been trampled to death or gone under the wheels of the waggon. But Paddy didn't move from her steady course. Neck and neck with the nearside pony she raced, while I struggled with all my power to slow the pony up. Gradually I realised that I was succeeding. The ponies faltered in their stride. The waggon lurched. The ponies slowed and at last came to an abrupt standstill.

I slipped down to the ground with the sweat pouring from my forehead and a dreadful wrenching pain in my arms and legs.

The squaw rushed up to me and hugged me, much to my embarrassment, and the Indian was so overcome that he could hardly thank me. I saw him on several occasions after this, and he was always a very good friend to me. It is useful to have friends among the Indians when you are in the Mounted Police, and he was a great help to me on many occasions.

The thing I prize most of the various nick-nacks and out-of-the-way information he gave me at different times is a recipe for a hair-restorer. Believe me, it is the most wonderful hair-restorer in the world! About this period (1909-1910) my hair began to come out in large quantities and I was getting quite worried about it. But I took the Indian's advice and used his special recipe, with the most marvellous results. I still have the recipe; it is one of my most precious possessions!

II

Indian Head was my depot most of the time I was in Saskatchewan, but I was hardly ever there after July, 1909; I was mostly stationed at Moosejaw and round about that district.

For the rest of that summer I can't remember that I had any out-of-the-way experiences, but early in the winter I was on a pretty big job, and one that was very much out of the ordinary.

It was a bright day, though cold, and I was sitting on a wooden bench cleaning my equipment outside the post when the door of the stores just opposite

flew open and a man rushed across to me in a great state of excitement.

"What's wrong?" I asked him.

"Old Man Ryan!" he gasped.

"Well?"

"He's dead! Murdered!"

I jumped to my feet.

"Murdered? How?"

Old Man Ryan was a store-keeper, a dear old man, and a famous character in those parts.

"He's had his head smashed in. . . . A breed's just come down to ask you to come up and investigate at once."

I wasted no time. The village of N—— where Old Man Ryan kept his store was about fifteen miles out of Moosejaw. I found the breed in a great state of excitement and he wanted to discuss the affair at length, but I wouldn't listen to him.

"You've got to come back with me," I told him, "and you can tell me everything on our way there."

On the way he told me all he knew which was nothing more than a gabbled account of what I'd already heard. Namely, that Ryan had been murdered by some unknown person who had come into the store. No one had seen the murder take place, though as a rule people were always in and out of Ryan's store.

"Any robbery?" I asked him. But he didn't even know that, and I had to be patient until I arrived at the village.

Once there I went straight to the store and took charge. It appeared that an Indian had come in to buy something from the store and was horrified to find Ryan lying in a pool of blood behind the counter. There was a deep gash at the back of his head. He was dead when the Indian found him, but had probably been dead only a few minutes. The till was open and all the money gone, and odds and ends had been taken from the shop such as cigarettes, tobacco and small junk of that kind. The whole place was in disorder. It was impossible to tell how much had been stolen, for the only man who could tell us that was Old Man Ryan himself and he (God rest his soul) was dead.

I had a look at the body and found that they had under-estimated the wound in Ryan's head. It was the most terrible wound I had ever seen in my life. His head had been almost split in two.

I got his body taken away, and talked to one or two of the loiterers round the store in the hope of picking up some more information, but I heard nothing that threw any light on the case. I then decided to follow a line of enquiry that has stood me in good stead on many investigations of this kind. I enquired if there had been any newcomers in the village during the last few months.

"No one," I was told, "except for the travelling dentists."

This information disturbed me, not that it was in any way out of the ordinary. It was quite a usual thing for travelling dentists to come to these small

towns and villages, for none of them boasted dentists of their own. (Most of the Indians who have not become too "civilised" have such excellent teeth that a dentist would very soon be bankrupt if he stayed in one district!) What disturbed me was that I knew I had heard of something in connection with a couple of travelling dentists lately, and what it was, for the life of me, I couldn't remember.

"Are the dentists still here?" I asked.

My informant shrugged.

"Maybe."

I at once made it my business to find out if the dentists were still there. I discovered that they were, and decided to pay a visit to their shack, which was on the outskirts of the village.

Only one of them was there and he seemed quite a pleasant man. I talked to him for some time and asked him various questions.

"How long are you staying?" I asked him.

"Not long. We may be packing up to-morrow. We don't seem to be able to persuade any of the guys here that their teeth need pulling out."

He laughed.

This can't be the murderer, I told myself. I'm on the wrong track. I'm wasting time here, and meanwhile the real murderer has probably got away. But where was the other dentist, this fellow's pal?

"Your partner?" I said. "Where is he?"

"Having a drink somewhere I expect," he answered. "That's where our earnings go." He made a wry face.

I saw plain enough that nothing more could be gained from talking to the dentist. And yet I was reluctant to leave him, for always at the back of my mind was the certainty that I had heard something about a couple of travelling dentists only a few weeks ago, and I felt sure that that something wasn't altogether creditable. It couldn't have been anything that had been told me officially; otherwise I should have remembered it. It must have been, I thought, just a chance remark that I had overheard.

So far I had not mentioned the murder and I thought it was wiser not to do so. If I did, and this man knew anything about it, he might become alarmed and pack up and get away. But to my surprise he mentioned it now himself.

"Been a bit of trouble down at the store, hasn't there."

"Yes, Ryan, the storekeeper, has been murdered," I said quickly and watched him intently.

"Bad business," he said. "Suppose you're here to investigate?"

"Yes, I'm here for that purpose, and naturally I have to interview all strangers to the town."

I felt uncomfortable, for it was obvious he knew why I had visited him.

"Of course," he answered readily, "I quite see that."

"Well, I must be going," I said. "I may look in again to-night to have a word with your pal."

"Well, let's hope he'll be sober," he remarked rather bitterly.

I left him and wondered what my next move ought to be. I cantered back through the village. It was possible I had wasted a great deal of time in suspecting these dentists simply because they were the only strangers in the place. But there were other reasons for suspecting them. In the first place I could not believe that one of the inhabitants had done the murder, for Old Man Ryan was liked by everyone and hadn't an enemy in the world. And again, I still had that feeling that I had heard something unfavourable about these dentists (at least, I thought it must be these dentists, for travelling dentists were not very numerous).

It was then that I encountered Jim Harding. About the last thing I expected to see was another Mounted Policeman, and I greeted him with joy. Here was someone to help me with my problem.

"Hullo, Bob? Hounding a murderer?"

"Sure, I am."

He stared.

"Really?"

I nodded.

"Someone's smashed the storekeeper's head in."

"What, Old Man Ryan?"

"Yes."

"God, that's beastly."

"And what are you supposed to be doing?"

"Oh, nothing very important. I've been tracking a couple of crook dentists. Someone told me they'd come on here. I don't expect they have."

"Sure, they have. What have they been up to?"

"Didn't I tell you about them last month when I came up to Moosejaw?"

Suddenly I remembered. Jim had told me that he was after two dentists who made a practice of getting their patients under gas and then robbing them of all their valuables. Fool that I was, not to have remembered that before. Well, that gave us ground for arresting them and if they'd had a hand in the murder we'd pretty soon find out. It was a miracle that Jim had happened to arrive at this moment.

"I've just been having a talk with one of the dentists," I told him. "Let's go back there right away. I have a feeling we may be able to kill two birds with one stone."

As we were going up to the shack, Jim told me some of the things the dentists had done. Their audacity was remarkable. Their usual plan of campaign in a village was to do their work well and efficiently until they found themselves in a rich man's house. They they would give him an extra dose of gas, steal what they could, and make good their escape. They would be out of the town in no time and well on their way to the next one before an outcry had been raised.

The dentist looked a little scared I thought, when we both entered. He was packing up his goods.

"We're thinking of moving on in the morning," he said.

"Your pal back yet?"

He shook his head.

Jim stepped forward.

"I shall have to arrest you," he said, "for robbery on eight different occasions."

The man turned pale.

"There must be some mistake——"

I decided to take a bold course. The man was in a jumpy condition just at the moment and I might catch him napping, if what I suspected was true.

"You say your pal isn't back yet? Well, *can you tell me what he's done with the axe?*"

The man staggered. His jaw dropped. He stared in horror.

"So he did do it, eh?"

He sat down wearily.

"I feared something terrible had happened when he came in with his coat covered with dark stains. And he seemed so anxious to get away in the morning. Said the Mounted were following us up from the last town. Well, that was true enough."

He laughed bitterly.

"Can you show us the coat?"

He walked slowly across the room and pulled the coat from a drawer. I picked it up. It was covered with bloodstains. Jim clicked the handcuffs on the dentist.

CHAPTER V

A COUNTERFEITER AND A YEGGMAN HUNT

I

THE dentist had said that his mate was probably drinking somewhere, so I went down to the saloon (the village only boasted one). As I went in the door I took a swift look round and thought I spotted my man straight away.

He was sitting, rather huddled up, in a far corner of the room. His eyes were bleary. He didn't look a pleasant customer, and I knew I'd never seen him in that neighbourhood before.

I wanted to make certain so I went up and had a talk with the man behind the bar. The conversation which had been loud when I entered had lulled abruptly and I was obliged to lean across the bar and speak quietly.

"That guy," I indicated him slightly with my thumb, "a stranger round here?"

"Yeah. He's a stranger." The bar-keeper who was chewing tobacco spat emphatically. "He's a stranger, sure. Why? D'you want him?"

He leant forward eagerly.

"That's my business," I answered curtly. "Who is the man?"

"Calls himself a dentist. He and a pal have got a shack at the top of the village. He's always drinking

down here. Don't see much of the pal. Don't want to if he's anything like this one."

That was good enough for me. At that moment the man in question reeled up to the bar and demanded more drink. Nobody was talking at all now. Evidently they had been regarding him with suspicion for some time.

I charged him with the murder. For a second he didn't move. Then my words seemed to sink into his brain and he realised what they meant. He picked up his empty glass and hurled it at me with all his force. I ducked. The glass crashed against the wall and fell to the ground shattered.

There was a murmur from the men sitting round. Some of them got up and ran towards us, prepared to assist me if I had any trouble. But I got the handcuffs on him quick as lightning, and after that I had no trouble.

We took the two men back with us, Jim and I. This was one of the few cases in which we had worked together, and on this occasion it was pure coincidence that had thrown us together. It had been an unpleasant "job." As far as I was concerned cases of this type always were. I never liked hounding down murderers, but it was often my duty, and therefore I had to do it to the best of my ability.

The murderer was hanged, and his pal got five years.

II

About this time I was put on a job that turned out to be a very long and arduous one. News had

come to headquarters at Moosejaw that a lot of counterfeit notes had been passed in different places round the district during the past months. I was given all the information that was obtainable (it wasn't very much), and I started off on one of the most tiring and difficult jobs I ever undertook. I took three months getting my man, and travelled in all about a thousand miles!

I won't weary you with monotonous descriptions of my travels from village to village, from town to town, only to find on every occasion that my man had been too quick for me. On several occasions I completely lost track of him. This happened, as a rule, after a particularly big coup, and I presumed he was lying low, or perhaps squandering his ill-gotten gains.

I was never really sure I was after the right man until I met Jessie Clayton, a pretty girl of the fluffy chocolate-box type, in a dance-hall at W—. Until that evening, which I shall describe in a minute, I had often started off on false trails and found myself interrogating men who turned out to be perfectly innocent, for the counterfeit notes often passed through many hands before it was discovered they were dud ones, and word might come to me that a lot of these notes had been discovered in a village which was actually, perhaps, a hundred miles from where the counterfeiter really was. So you can see how easy it was to go off on a wild-goose chase. It was the type of job to drive a Mounted man to despair, and I really believe I'd have given

up the pursuit altogether if the taunts of an old farmer hadn't been ringing always in my ears.

The name of the old farmer was Tupper, but he was known as Tall Joe, possibly on account of his height, which was well above the average, but more likely on account of the tall stories he never tired of telling. They were darn' good ones, too!

He thought he was a pretty shrewd guy, Tall Joe did; and he was certainly one of the most business-like farmers I met in the North-West; but he got let down badly when he accepted a lot of counterfeit notes, and he was furious at being deceived.

I arrived at his place in response to urgent messages that were sent down to the nearest town, and he met me in a towering rage.

"You're a North-West Mounted Policeman are you?" he said, peering down at me from beneath his great shaggy brows. He bit each word out slowly and deliberately so that they really did sound contemptuous, but I wasn't very worried by his attitude. I'd met him before and I knew that as a rule he was a genial, hard-working man, with never a bad word to say for anyone.

He stood before me now, his eyes flashing under his black brows, his tall muscular body straight and proud. He was a fine-looking man. The sneer in his voice hurt; I felt I wanted to vindicate in his eyes the Force to which I belonged. Perhaps that was what he'd intended.

"I'm Bob Dyker," I said. "We've met before."

"Maybe," he answered gruffly. "But you're still

a Mounted Policeman, aren't you? And you're supposed to be tracking down this b—— rogue of a counterfeiter, aren't you? And a lot of good you're doing!"

I broke in on this outburst.

"I've been trying to get him for six weeks," I said. "And you needn't worry, I'll get him in the end."

Tall Joe, standing with his legs wide apart and his hands on his hips, threw back his head and laughed bitterly.

"Oh, I've heard that yarn before. You Mounted men talk fine, and you look fine all decked up in your little uniforms. But can you *do* anything? I've yet to meet one of you who's ever really done anything!"

It was silly, I know, to get annoyed by these remarks, for it was obvious the man was enraged by his losses and was working some of it off by taunting the Mounted Police and myself in particular. But I *did* get annoyed. I've never been very good at disguising my real feelings and after all the hard work I'd put in on this wretched job, it riled me to be stormed at by this angry farmer.

"It did you a darned lot of good to lose a bit of money," I shouted. "A Mounted man's worth two of you! How dare you stand there making insulting remarks about the Force!"

He took a step forward. His hands clenched and unclenched.

"I'll wring your miserable neck for you, if you don't take those words back!" he roared.

"If I fail to get that counterfeiter I'll apologise," I said. "And not before, you . . ." I'm afraid I then used one or two rather strong words.

"D'you want a fight?" he blustered.

But I left him after that, remembering that discretion is the better part of valour, and not being over-anxious to continue my pursuit with a black eye. Tall Joe was a big man!

But I didn't forget that little encounter with him, and I was determined to get my man, if only to prove to Tall Joe that the Mounted Police didn't deserve the nasty things he'd said about them.

But if it hadn't been for Jessie Clayton I'm pretty sure I'd never have got him. I arrived at W—— with a pretty shrewd idea of who my man was, or rather, what he looked like, and on making enquiries I discovered that a man answering to my description had left some weeks before for an unknown destination after making a fairly long stay in the place. But beyond that I could get no information. I made enquiries at every likely source, but met with no success. No one seemed to know much about him, except that he seemed very wealthy. Nor did anyone know where he'd gone.

I'd almost decided to push on without more delay to the nearest big town, when once again fate stepped in and took charge of the situation (or, if you like it better, shall I say that my proverbial good luck still held). The men I'd been talking to dissuaded me from moving on that evening.

"Forget about your work for one night," they

said. "Come along and dance at *Jackie's* and push off to-morrow morning."

I yielded, and afterwards was mighty glad I'd done so.

Jackie's was a stuffy little dance-hall such as are often to be found in the towns thereabouts. It wasn't much of a place but I made up my mind I was going to have a good time, and I looked around as soon as I got in (I don't mind confessing it) to see if there were any pretty girls there. At first I was disappointed and thought I was in for a dull evening, but suddenly I caught sight of a girl standing with one or two admirers clustered round her in a far corner of the room. It didn't take a second glance to tell me that she was remarkably pretty. She was small and delicate-looking, with beautiful golden hair. But the most remarkable thing about her was the gorgeous and expensive way in which she was dressed. She stood out from everybody else in the hall, and I wondered who she was.

"I have a sort of hunch that that girl has blue eyes," I said to one of the men who had brought me in.

He laughed.

"What, Jessie? You're right, she has! But they're not for you!"

"No, I was afraid not. But who is the girl? She's pretty rich, isn't she?"

My companion shrugged his shoulders.

"Appearances are deceptive. She hasn't a bean."

I glanced again at the girl. A little ripple of laughter broke from her and came faintly across the haze of smoke to us.

"And who is the—er—unfortunate man?"

My companion suddenly stared at me open-mouthed. For a moment neither of us said anything. At last:

"Well, what's wrong?" I asked.

"I suddenly remembered—that man you're after, the one you think may be a counterfeiter, he and Jessie were pretty thick. That's where she got her fine dresses from, and all her jewellery."

"Gosh, man," I exclaimed, jumping to my feet, "why, in the name of Moses, didn't you tell me about this girl before? She's sure to know where he's gone. I can pump her and be on his track in a few hours."

"I didn't think of her before. But you won't get anything out of her."

"I'll have a darned good try."

"O.K. I know her a bit. I'll introduce you."

We went across the room to where she was sitting.

"Waal, Jessie, enjoying yourself?" he asked the girl.

The two men who were standing beside her looked annoyed at the interruption.

She glanced up at my companion from beneath lazy lashes.

"Well, Tom, what do you want?"

"I want to introduce you to a pal of mine—a stranger in this district—Bill Fleming." (He didn't know my real name.) I was afraid the girl might

have seen me earlier in the day in my uniform, but evidently she hadn't.

She turned to me languidly.

"I'm sure I'm ver' pleased to meet you," she drawled. "It's a pleasure to see a new face in these parts."

Her voice was slightly husky and she slurred over her words in a way that made her speech very attractive to listen to. As she spoke she glanced significantly at the two men beside her, as if to indicate that *their* faces anyway were by no means new.

"I'm only making a very short stay, I'm afraid," I replied, "but I can see it will be well rewarded. I had not expected to meet anyone so charming."

Keep the flattery going, I told myself, and you'll do the trick.

She giggled and thrust her foot forward coyly. I didn't care for the girl much. She looked a little flirt, though there was no doubt she was darned pretty.

My companion made his excuses and moved off.

"Be a dear, Arthur," the girl said suddenly to one of the young men, "and get me a drink."

He moved off obediently, but he hadn't gone more than a couple of paces when she called him back.

"No, don't get one. I don't think I want one after all."

He returned sheepishly. The other young man laughed. The band struck up, and I thought this was a suitable opportunity to ask her to dance.

After that I danced with her several times and each time gave her pretty big doses of flattery. I could see she was the sort that needed a lot of it.

The other young men drifted away. She made it pretty clear to them that she only desired to dance with me. I didn't take it as a compliment. She was a vain, petty little creature, and I hadn't much use for her, except as a means of getting the information I wanted.

She drank quite a lot and became talkative. Which was what I wanted. It was a warm night, and I took her out on to a little balcony which the dance-hall boasted.

"No one seems to have much money round these parts," I commented casually.

She looked down at the rings that glistened on her fingers, and touched her necklacc lightly.

"These are real pearls," she said softly.

"Of course," I answered quickly, "but I meant the men. They don't look as if they've got the price of a drink between them."

"Oh, but there was——" she started impulsively and then stopped short.

"Well?"

She glanced up at me hesitantly. Then went on more slowly.

"I like you," she said. "I'm going to take you into my confidence."

I felt very mean suddenly at the underhand methods I was using. But then I realised that I was

only doing my duty, and that anyway this girl's feelings were not worth worrying over, and I let her go on.

"I had a friend," she said, "a dark, attractive man. Gus Merriman his name was. He was very rich and he gave me a lovely time, bought me something new every day. I fell in love with him. . . ."

She paused. I waited for her to go on.

"I thought . . ." she continued in a low voice, "I thought he was in love with me. He told me he was. He promised to marry me. We were—very intimate."

She paused again.

"I don't know why I'm telling you all this," she went on suddenly, "but you seem sympathetic—different to most of the men I know round here."

Again I felt a stab of meanness, but I determined that, having gone so far, I would see the whole thing through.

"He was a beast at the end," she continued. "A beast! He came to me one day and said he was going away on the next. I naturally thought he would take me with him. He'd said he was going to marry me: I implored him to take me. There was a terrible scene, terrible! I never saw him after that. He went the next day. That was about three weeks ago."

I leant forward.

"Did he tell you where he was going?"

She stared.

"Why d'you want to know that?"

I cursed myself for being over-cager. There was only one method of getting that valuable information out of her now.

"I am a member of the Mounted Police," I said, "and I want to know where that man has gone."

She turned deathly white. I thought she was going to faint.

"He hasn't done anything—— He wasn't——?" she faltered, her eyes wide and frightened.

But the frightened look vanished from her eyes as quickly as it came, and she flew into a fearful rage, and stormed at me for deceiving her. She actually tried to scratch and kick me, but I held her wrists until she grew calmer.

"It will be better for you if you tell me," I warned her quietly.

For a moment she was silent. Then she made up her mind.

"I *will* tell you," she said, "and if I didn't hate you so much I'd hope you'd catch him."

I smiled to myself as I realised how quickly her so-called affection for me had turned to hate.

"Yes, I'll tell you," she said again. "He deserves everything that comes to him. He behaved like a cad to me."

I heaved a sigh of relief as I realised that the battle was won. Jessie Clayton told me where the man was heading for. She said he'd told her all his plans for the future, so it occurred to me it was possible he really had intended to marry her at once

time, but had found out what a worthless little flirt she was. I didn't let her know what I was thinking, however, and we parted on fairly good terms.

"Has he been thieving?" she asked me.

"That's my business," I told her, "but you can take it from me he's no good."

She shrugged her little shoulders and her eyes filled with tears.

"I've never met an honest man in my life," she said.

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Yes, I left Jessie Clayton sadly disillusioned, but I couldn't feel sorry for her. She was a worthless little thing.

I left the town that night. I wanted to get on to the track of this man Merriman, as he called himself, as soon as I possibly could. I had no reason to believe that Jessie had given me wrong information. She felt spitefully enough towards him to hope that he would be brought to justice, though she evidently didn't know about the counterfeiting. I was certain this time that I wasn't on a wrong trail.

And I was right. In ten days' time I'd got my man red-handed. I had no difficulty in capturing him and taking him back to barracks. He confessed (he hadn't much alternative for I found a lot of counterfeit notes on him), and after being kept in barracks some time until the courts were sitting, he was brought up for trial, and received five years in the penitentiary.

I can tell you I was mighty glad when that "job" was over!

III

Yeggmen are safe-blowers, and the North-West is by no means clear of this type of crook. In the small out-of-the way towns and villages which are fortunate enough to possess a bank, they find plenty of opportunity for pursuing their craft.

My last big job in Saskatchewan was the capture of some yeggmen; one of them was a notorious crook who had been "wanted" for some time. There had been a succession of bank hold-ups, and in every case the thieves had got away with all the cash in the safe. A sergeant and myself and another constable were detailed to go out and get this bunch of yeggmen, and in cold, snowy weather we set off.

We had been told to go first to a small town where the last robbery had occurred.

There we found the bank manager sadly surveying his safe, the back of which had been skilfully blown out and all the contents removed. The safe was of the old type, whilst the bank itself was nothing more than a one-roomed shack about 12 ft. by 12 ft. square. I could see at a glance that this would have been an easy job for a clever yeggman. We had a good look round to see if we could get hold of any clue, and as usual made enquiries about strangers.

We couldn't get any information, however, so we decided to move off to another small place about seven miles away where we thought it was possible

the crooks had gone. There we went through the same routine about enquiring for strangers, but were told that none had been seen. 'It was getting latish by then so we decided to settle there for the night, taking it in turns to patrol the place in case any suspicious characters should turn up.

It was very early in the morning—and I can remember it was very cold—when a man came galloping into the village. I heard the hooves of his horse thudding along on the soft snow as I lay drowsily in the shack where we'd put up for the night.

The sergeant woke up at the same time as I did.

"What the hell's Gunner doing?" he grumbled.

"I don't think that's Gunner," I answered. "He wouldn't gallop past our shack into the village. If there was any trouble brewing he'd give us a call first."

The other constable who was working with us was always called Gunner. He was a pleasant, fair-haired Canadian youth.

The sergeant grunted.

"Mebbe," he said. "Anyway, I ain't had enough sleep yet, and I'm gonna get some more right away."

He turned over and was soon snoring.

I remember that sergeant well. He always insisted he must have his full eight hours. Needless to say, being a Mounted Policeman, he seldom got it!

I turned over too, and closed my eyes. But in a moment I was on the alert again, for the sound of galloping hooves came again to my ears. This

time it seemed as if there were two horses coming towards the shack.

I listened to hear them go by. But they paused outside the shack and I heard Gunner's voice telling the stranger, whoever he was, to come right in. I leapt to my feet, slipped on a coat, and went out to meet them.

"Say," Gunner called out when he saw me, "we'll have to be moving on. There's been another robbery."

I glanced at his companion. He was covered with snow and looked tired.

"This good man has ridden over to tell us," Gunner said. "He's coming back with us when he's found a bite to eat. The sooner we get going the better."

I went back and roused the sergeant. He grumbled a lot. But he wasn't a man who'd shirk his duty, in spite of his respect for his beauty-sleep.

We were soon cantering towards the next little town with our new companion as a guide. Another bank had been broken open, he said. He was the son of the bank-manager. His father was in despair. He, the son, had ridden over himself to fetch us to console his father who had really taken the whole affair very hard. That was all the news we got from him. When we arrived we found that what he said was true.

The bank-manager was behaving like an angry child. He was a large, fat man. His face was chubby, and it looked as though in prosperous times it was

creased with smiles. To-day it wore a forlorn expression which was almost laughable.

At first we could get nothing intelligible out of him. He was cursing and swearing so frantically that he wouldn't tell us how his safe had been robbed. But after a bit he calmed down and told us.

"It was just before closing time yesterday," he said, "that a guy came in to get a cheque cashed. I refused to oblige him. I didn't know the man, and you can't be too careful round these parts. I half turned round, expecting him to go, but he just stood there glaring at me. 'I'm locking up now,' I told him, 'so you'd better be going.'"

"But he just stood there quite still without saying a word. I turned round then and busied myself for a moment or two behind the counter. I knew he was still there because I hadn't heard a sound. When I glanced up again his head was turned towards the door as if he were waiting for something. I began to feel a bit alarmed. I guess any man would have felt the same. I lost my temper with him."

"Because you felt afraid?" I asked him, a little derisively. He was not a specimen of humanity that appealed to me.

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," he said sulkily. "I'm telling you my story, and as you're supposed to be trying to get the b—— crooks, I guess you'd better listen to it."

I realised the rebuke was earned, and told him to get on with his tale. Something about that bank manager irritated me. He was so confoundedly

sorry for himself. But maybe I was hard on the fellow; there was good reason, I suppose, for his pitiful state.

"I lost my temper with him," the bank-manager said. "'I've told you I'm just locking up,' I shouted at him. 'It's no use hanging around here. I can't change your cheque and there's an end of it!' But he didn't budge. He just smiled and said: 'Guess I'll wait here a little while.'"

"'Get!' I roared at him, shaking my fist. But at that moment I noticed a second man coming in the doorway. I was just about to ask him to help me remove my objectionable customer when I realised that he, too, was a stranger. I glanced back at the other man and to my horror I saw he'd pulled a gun on me. I was helpless. I was alone in the place. You can see how small it is; I'm often alone here. The second man let two other men in and then locked the door. They must have known it was closing time and no one else would be coming along. The first man kept me covered the whole time. Then they gagged me, bound me with rope and left me trussed up in the tiny outer office. I could hear them breaking into the safe and ransacking the place while I lay helpless.

"They were not more than half-an-hour on the job. Then they came and had a look at me. 'Good-bye, papa!' one of them said. The impudence, the audacity of the man!"

The bank-manager spluttered with rage at the thought of it.

"You didn't attempt to get away from the men before they attacked you?"

"What could I do? I was covered. I didn't want to be shot like a dog."

Then, to the intense discomfiture of his son and indeed of all of us, the bank-manager began to weep copiously. Wringing his hands, he implored us in between his sobs to capture the yeggmen who had been responsible for this outrage. He was in a pitiful state. Apparently his plight hadn't been discovered for several hours after the yeggmen had left the bank, so that for a very long time he had lain on the floor, trussed up like a fowl, alone with what must have been somewhat humiliating thoughts.

We assured him we would do our best, and left his son to try and comfort him.

We conferred together for a little while after this, and studied the map. We noticed that the crooks were working due North. There was another village of about the same size as the others which lay about a dozen miles further North, and we decided we'd better make for that village first on the chance that they'd gone there.

Off we went, only to learn on arriving that another bank robbery had taken place at a place which was two villages further away to the West.

"Gosh, those guys don't lose any time," Gunner exclaimed, mopping his brow.

"Sure, this last job was slick work," the sergeant answered. "And they'll beat us every time unless we think out a different plan of campaign."

o o i

"Shouldn't be surprised if they don't separate and work in pairs sometimes," I remarked. "The tearful bank-manager said there were four of 'em."

"Guess he was seeing things," Gunner said nastily.

"No," the sergeant put in. "I reckon he was about right. We'll have to separate too. It's the only thing to do."

So we separated, arranging to meet at a certain spot ahead. We followed the old trails, each going a different way, and keeping a keen look out for strangers.

I had been some little time on the way and was getting on towards the spot where we had arranged to meet; when suddenly I heard the sound of hooves in the distance, and drawing behind a small rough-built shack which had obviously been empty for some time, I waited for the riders to approach. It was not a trail that was used much nowadays and it was just about in the neighbourhood I expected the crooks to be, so I was very suspicious. It occurred to me, as the horsemen came nearer, that they might be making for this very shack, so I made Paddy lie down (I still had the old horse), and kept under cover myself.

Sure enough, the riders—there were two of them—made straight for the shack, and after tethering their horses, went inside and started to light a fire.

Once again luck was on my side. It was in the depths of winter and the snow was deep all around,

but the trail I had followed was covered with thin ice which did not leave any trace of tracks.

Scarcely daring to breathe I crept along on my stomach to the shack, listening carefully. I could hear their voices, and what they were saying made me certain that these were the men I wanted. They were discussing their next job, but unfortunately they didn't mention—or I didn't catch—the name of the town they intended to go to; otherwise I should have slipped away, collected Gunner and the sergeant, and lain in wait for them.

It's no good being foolhardy on a job of this kind. A couple of desperadoes, with guns which they wouldn't hesitate to use, are a match for the man at any time, no matter how plucky he may be, and I claim no medals for being unduly brave. But I'd got to get these two men somehow. I couldn't do it by force, so I had to use strategy.

The fact that they were lighting a fire showed that they intended to stay for some time, and it suddenly occurred to me that as there was only one entrance to the shack and the windows were tiny I might by wedging the door be able to keep them prisoners. There was an old broken one-man plough not far away and getting hold of this I dragged it as quietly as I could over the soft snow towards the door.

I nearly gave the game away when I fell into a drift waist-high, but I managed to keep my elf from uttering a sound, and struggled out again. At last I got the plough up to the door and inch by inch

I lowered one end of it into the snow, wedging it firmly up against the door (which opened outwards). I should think it took me nearly a quarter of an hour after I got the plough to the door before I had it fixed to my satisfaction, so cautiously did I proceed. When it was finally fixed nearly half of it was buried deep in the heavy snow while the uncovered part came halfway up the door, so that it was an impossible task to force the door open, short of actually breaking it down.

In spite of my extreme caution I must have made a slight noise for I heard one of the men suddenly say to the other:

"What's that, Al?"

"Nothing," was the reply. "Horses getting a bit restless, mebbe."

I waited with my hand on my gun ready to make a fight of it if one of them were to peer through the little window near the door, but nothing happened. They seemed to be arguing about something and were not paying much attention to anything else.

Then, to make their task more difficult if they did find out my ruse before I got back with my pals, I decided to take their horses away. It was a risk, but worth taking, for without their horses it was impossible for them to get far. I thought it would make too much noise if I went off with all three at once, so I took them one at a time a little way off, keeping on the "blind" side of the shack where there were no windows. Then I mounted Paddy and rode off

with all three. After a bit I dropped the two yeggmen's horses and rode at full gallop to the meeting-spot where I knew the others would be waiting.

Actually I met them coming along the trail towards me as they'd guessed I'd run up against something, being such a long time on my way. It was lucky they'd already covered a bit of ground for, though we made good time back to the shack, we were only just in time. As we rode up we heard shouts of rage and hammering on the door.

We rode to within easy distance when there was a loud report and a cry of warning from the sergeant. We flung ourselves from our mounts and made them gallop off and lie down (the intelligence of most of the Mounted men's horses is extraordinary). Then taking advantage of every available bit of cover we three began crawling over the snow towards the shack.

Bullets whistled above our heads.

"This is some game!" Gunner muttered as he plunged into a drift.

It was useless for us to fire, for the men were firing through the windows, and the chance of getting them was very faint. Anyway, we didn't want to reveal our exact positions.

Shots were coming thick and fast now, for they knew they were trapped, and realised their only chance was to get us before we got them.

"Look here, boys," the sergeant said suddenly, "here's a scheme. Bob, I want you to pretend the next bullet has hit you. Make it obvious. But fall

on your stomach facing the shack and keep your gun clasped in front of you. Gunner and I'll worm our way round to the side so that in order to pot at us they'll have to lean from the window. They won't be taking any notice of you, thinking you're dead. If you can get one of 'em that way, the rest'll be easy."

I did what he said. The next time they fired I gave a yell, leapt in the air and rolled over into a convenient position. The others wriggled on, gradually shortening the space between them and the shack, but all the time working round to the "blind" side so that the men had to fire from more of an angle.

I waited my chance. One of them leant out to fire. Crack! went my gun. He slithered backwards into the arms of his companion.

The other man made a desperate bid for freedom, leaning out at great risk and firing the rest of his ammunition rapidly in the direction of my companions. I fired at him but missed badly. My nerve had been shaken a bit by killing the other man. This one evidently realised his only chance was to kill or wound my two pals and then remain in the hut to try and lure me out into the open. Fortunately, though Gunner got a slight wound in the fleshy part of his leg, no damage was done. The man's ammunition gave out, and he gave himself up.

We took him back to Headquarters with us, but all the way there not a word would he let slip about

the other members of his gang. He admitted he was the leader.

"You won't have to worry any more," he said. "It was agreed that if I was copped, there wasn't gonna be any more safe-breaking."

He paused and smiled reflectively.

"Anyway," he said, "I guess it'll take 'em some time before they find as good a yeggman as Spike Regan."

We gasped. Spike Regan was notorious all over the country, and was one of the cleverest crooks the North-West knew. Gunner and I glanced at the sergeant unbelievably, but the sergeant nodded his head slowly.

"I've been trying to figure out who the devil you reminded me of for some time," he said. "And I reckon you're Spike Regan right enough. I've seen his photo many a time," he added, turning to us.

Spike laughed.

"Sure, that's cute of you," he said mockingly.

He was tried at the Civic Court and sentenced to fifteen years, and on his removal from the court I was selected for escort duty. I was glad, for I couldn't help liking old Spike (I think everybody did). He was unflinchingly loyal to his pals, and always cheerful in spite of the trouble he was in.

I had another prisoner to escort at the same time, but he was a wretched little man. He whimpered the whole time and was often in tears. The yeggman was handcuffed to this miserable specimen and I

could see he didn't like it much. He tried to cheer the little fellow up. He kept me in roars of laughter at his yarns, but the miserable one continued to whimper, and at last Spike gave it up as a bad job.

"Lord's truth," he said. "Here we are on a b—— picnic at somebody else's expense, and you're howling your eyes out." He winked at me. "There's no accounting for some folk, is there, Mister Policeman?"

"Oh, my poor little wife," the other prisoner moaned.

Spike raised his eyes comically to heaven in an expression of resignation.

"What are you going to do, Spike," I asked, "when you get out?"

"Sonny," he replied, "I've fifteen years to think that out. I guess I'll join the prison football team. I'm nippy on the wing!"

We parted the best of friends. I wish I'd met more crooks as pleasant as old Spike Regan.

PART TWO

ALBERTA AND THE FROZEN NORTH



CHAPTER VI

THE TRAGEDIES OF TWO WOMEN

I

For just over a year I spent most of my time in Alberta. My base was Edmonton, and if you'll take a glance at the map you'll see it's a good bit further North than Moosejaw, my previous base. I was pretty pleased when I heard I was going up there. I don't know why it is, but I think you'll find if you ask any old North-West Mounted man he'll tell you the same—that he felt a kind of exultation, the same as I did, as he was moved further North. It may be because of all the tales I'd heard and read about as a kid. Rough Justice in the Frozen North, and that kind of thing; and the Peace River country too; it all held a kind of romance for me, and although you may think I'd had a good bit of excitement already in Saskatchewan, I was always looking forward to the time when I was to visit the frozen stretches of the Far North, and Edmonton was in the right direction anyway!

It meant leaving behind most of my old pals, except for Paddy whom I insisted on taking with me, faithful old servant as he was. Still, they were a friendly crowd up there, and who should turn up after I'd been there a month or two but old Jackie Rutherford, the ugly, cheery little American.

But before he came along two incidents occurred which, though both unrelated, made a deep impression on me.

I won't say much about the first incident. It was very unpleasant. I was patrolling a district not far from Edmonton when it happened. It was towards the end of the day and I was coming back to barracks at a leisurely pace.

There's a lot of bare country round there, not much inhabited, broken every now and again by patches of Bush. During the daytime wolves and coyotes (prairie dogs, something like wolves) often lurk in these patches, and only come out during the night when they prowl around in search of food. It is always foolish to venture into the Bush alone on foot, and it was very seldom that anyone left the trails unless they were fleeing from justice, or for some other desperate reason.

I was therefore astounded when I heard a shrill scream coming from the bush. It sounded to me like a woman, and I didn't hesitate a second. I plunged into the thickness of the Bush in the direction I thought the scream had come from.

Once inside I heard no sound, and I pulled Paddy up and listened intently. Then it came again, another scream, ghastly, agonising. It sent icy shivers down my back. I felt the sweat trickling down my face from my forehead. It was a scream more terrible than any I have ever heard, and I earnestly pray I shall never hear such a scream again. I plunged through the Bush desperately.

I was certain now that I was going in the right direction for the screams and moans were almost continuous, and they were getting louder as I drew near.

Suddenly I came upon a little clearing and saw the terrible sight that I had dreaded seeing and yet knew that I must see. Paddy reared up in terror as we almost trampled underfoot a big brute with fangs gleaming. It was a coyote. A little way ahead there were half-a-dozen of these brutes attacking a woman!

I drew my gun in a flash and shot the one nearest to me. At the sound of the shot, the other animals stopped worrying the woman and looked up. There was a sudden silence broken only by faint moans from the woman. I picked out another coyote who was far enough away from her to avoid any risk of my shooting her, and I plugged him clean through the head. He leapt into the air and fell motionless. Paddy whimpered. I patted him, and he quietened.

Another coyote advanced towards me. I shot him down. There was a howl from a brute who was standing over the woman. One of the animals started slinking off. All of a sudden the three of them slunk away. Like all creatures of the wolf breed, the coyote is a coward. If a leader is shot—most packs, however few in numbers, have a recognised leader—the rest seldom put up much resistance unless driven almost mad, as they sometimes are, by hunger.

I leapt off my horse and rushed towards the

woman. She was still alive—still conscious—and must have been in fearful pain. I lifted her up as gently as I could, mounted Paddy, and rode out into the open prairie. Then I dismounted, and examined her.

She was in a terrible state. I felt almost sick as I looked at her, but I nerved myself to face the truth. And the truth was this: It was many miles to the nearest habitation. The woman was terribly mutilated. In fact she hardly had a shred of clothing left on her. One glance told me that she was an expectant mother, and I could have cried for very pity. If I took her back several miles to the nearest shack without doctoring her wounds I knew there wasn't a hope of her living. But how could I doctor her?

I tore my shirt to shreds and bandaged her as best I could, but she was losing blood rapidly and there were several gaping wounds which must be sewn up. I had a needle and cotton. I set my teeth and sewed up the worst wounds though it was torture for me to do so. *For the woman even now was still conscious.*

Her screams began again as I clumsily set about my horrible task. At last to my great relief she lost consciousness.

I got her back to the nearest village, where she was recognised. She was apparently a native of the place. She was properly doctored there, and when I left that night there seemed a good chance of her recovering.

But I returned there four days later to find that she had died.

"What was she doing," I asked, "wandering out in the Bush like that miles from anywhere?"

Her husband, a decent man, whom I was questioning, touched his head significantly.

"It was to do with the baby that was coming," he said. "She'd been suffering from queer delusions for some days. I blame myself for not looking after her better, but I never dreamt she'd go wandering off by herself like that."

His voice shook; and he almost broke down. I felt very sorry for him, and tried to comfort him as best I could.

He thanked me for what I'd done, but I felt bitter about it, for what good had it all been? I couldn't sleep for many nights after that, for thinking of that poor woman, terribly mutilated, screaming and screaming out in the lonely Bush. It works on your imagination, a thing like that, and the telling of it has brought it back only too vividly into my mind.

II

The second incident was not exactly an unpleasant one, but it made a very deep impression on me because it concerned Molly Cornish—and I once loved the girl.

The whole business started down in Strathcona, a town a good bit south of Edmonton. I was on lone patrol and Strathcona lay in my district. Passing along the main street I heard a great commotion coming from a dance-hall and went in to investigate.

To my surprise I found only a handful of people there when I got in. From the noise I'd heard I'd expected to find a pretty large gathering.

There was a silence as I entered.

"What's the trouble?" I demanded.

A pretty fair-haired girl was crouching in a corner of the room. She looked scared stiff when she saw me, and at first I couldn't understand why. Then I suddenly recognised her.

It was Smoky Moll.

Now, Smoky Moll was well known to the Mounted Police as being rather a bad lot. She was called Smoky Moll because she never had a cigarette out of her mouth. I'd seen her for a brief moment once before. She'd been mixed up in some case or other—I forget what it was. From what I'd heard of her, I'd no great liking for her.

"What's the trouble?" I asked again, this time turning directly towards the girl. If there had been any trouble—and from the disorderly state of the room it looked as if there'd been quite a lot—I was pretty sure Smoky Moll had had something to do with it.

But she wouldn't answer; just shrugged her shoulders.

I glanced round the room. There were a few men and women scattered round the walls. Then I noticed one of the men was trying to make himself inconspicuous. He had a swollen lip and was bleeding from the nose.

"Been fighting?" I said casually.

Now, you might think that as there was no bribe going on it would serve no useful purpose for me to investigate the matter any further. But I saw in my early days in the Mounted, so many really big "jobs" were the outcome of a constable following up some trifling incident that I'd made a resolution—and one that I always kept—to investigate even the most insignificant incidents and when chasing my man to follow up the most insignificant clues. It was a good policy.

In this case it led to nothing sensational. It merely provided the sequel to my little love-affair with Molly Cornish, and did away with one of the untidy threads that hang in the lives of every man. In my case the untidy thread that dangled in my memory was the question: "What became of Molly Cornish, that sweet, impulsive creature whom I held in my arms at Regina?"

Smoky Moll gave me the answer.

"Yeah," the man admitted. "I've had a scrap, and some scrap it was!"

He fingered his mouth ruefully.

"Who've you been fighting with?"

He looked round the room humorously and appeared to be examining the features of everyone there.

"Say, I don't seem to have made much impression on any of them, do I, Mountie?"

"No, an' I guess you haven't been fighting with yourself."

"You're right there." He turned to the others.

"Any of you guys got a slab of metal to put down my back. I'm kind o' tired of watching my nose bleed."

I smiled, and was about to leave the place without attempting to find out any more, for, after all, things were quiet now, and whoever the man had been fighting had obviously slipped away. But then I looked at Smoky Moll, and I remembered my policy about getting to the bottom of the most insignificant affairs.

"I might as well have one more shot at finding out," I said to myself and went over to where Smoky Moll was sitting on the floor.

She set her mouth in a firm line when I approached. She looked a bit scared and on the defensive. Not that that meant anything, for Smoky Moll always looked like that when she saw a Mounted man. She never quite knew what they were going to tackle her with next.

"Can you give me any information," I asked her, "about this fight that's been going on?"

She shook her head.

"I don't know—anything."

"Well, kid, don't look so worried. Can you just tell me if anyone's been badly hurt?"

"Oh, is that all you want to know? Well, this is what's happened. Bill over there," she indicated the man I'd just been speaking to, "got a little jealous because I was havin' a chat with a friend of mine who didn't happen to be a friend of his. He hit my friend. They had a fight, and Bill got

the best of it. The other man's slunk off. That's all, see?"

She glared at me, as if daring me to ask anything more.

And indeed I didn't see that I could do any good by carrying on. The only thing I feared was that the "other man," whoever he was, had been knifed, and that they'd shoved his body out of the way. But there was really no reason to suspect this, and Bill's face certainly gave one the impression that they'd had a genuine fight.

I glanced down at Smoky Moll.

"Thanks," I said. "I guess I'll be moving on then if that's all it is."

But I didn't move an inch, and I didn't take my eyes off her. Why? Because I'd just seen something that took me back with a leap to a sunny day in Regina when Molly Cornish was leaping backwards in my arms—laughing. I'd noticed on that day for the first time a little silver locket she was wearing. I'd asked her what it was and she'd said it had been given to her by her grandfather. It was very old.

Now, hanging round the neck of Smoky Moll, was the identical locket! I was certain it was the same one, for I remembered the markings on it clearly.

"Where did you get that from?" I asked her sternly.

She looked anxiously towards Bill who was still nursing his nose, and tried to cover up the locket with her coat.

I leant down and caught hold of it. The fragile chain snapped.

"How dare you!" she screamed at me.

Now that I held the locket in my hand, I was absolutely convinced it was Molly's.

"If you don't tell me how you got hold of this," I threatened her, "it will be tough for you."

The only way to get anything out of her was to threaten her, for she was hard-boiled. But I felt she'd been mixed up in so many crooked things that I was on pretty sure ground to pretend I knew more than I did.

The dance-hall was deserted now, except for Bill, who came up to us and peered down at Smoky Moll. Everyone had cleared out. I wondered vaguely, and for the first time, what they'd all been doing in the dance-hall at that time of day when no dancing was going on. Possibly, like me, they'd heard the turmoil inside and had gone in to see the fun. I never knew.

The girl hesitated for a moment, glanced up at Bill who was towering above her, and then jumped to her feet, her eyes flashing.

"Yes, I will tell you!" she cried. "I got it from Al—he gave it to me—which is more than you've ever done," she added, turning on the unfortunate Bill fiercely.

"Who is Al?" I enquired mildly.

"Al Palmer. You must have heard of him. He's known everywhere. He's a crack gunner. He—

he's a fine man!" She finished up breathlessly, her eyes shining.

"I kinda think you've finished with that guy," Bill said menacingly. "Fine man! B—— rotten with his fists, anyway!"

But I had heard all I needed. I knew Al Palmer right enough. He was a crook, a crack gunner, who'd come from the States. The Mounted Police had nothing definite on him, but he was suspected for several nasty little "jobs." He'd been missing for some time. No one seemed to know where he was. Well, I'd got on his track. That was one good thing. And I had a hunch that Al would be able to tell me something interesting about little Molly.

I was aware that Bill had hold of Smoky Moll by the shoulders and was shaking her roughly. She was sobbing.

"Cut that out!" I jerked.

He stopped.

"Little fool!" he said. "Doesn't know what's good for her."

"Well, I'm not stopping," I said. "You two had better make it up."

"Give me back my locket," the girl cried.

"I want that," I said grimly. "And if you're going to make a fuss, I'll remind you I'm a member of the North-West Mounted, and we've been mighty lenient to you, my girl, over several cases, but we might suddenly stop being lenient."

She stood with her back to the wall, her hands clenched, her face very pale.

"You don't want that goldarned thing!" the man urged.

Suddenly she relaxed and let her hands fall to her side.

"No, you're dead right, Bill. I don't want it. And I don't want you either, you b—— Mountie! Oh, give me a cigarette." She turned disgustedly to her companion.

I laughed, and left the dance-hall with one thought running through my mind. I must get Al Palmer!

I made enquiries in the town, but could find no trace of him. I finally satisfied myself he'd "jumped" a journey on the railroad, for he'd been last seen making in that direction.

I had to get special permission to go after the man, for it was really for purely personal motives that I wanted him, but the permission was granted me because it was always useful to know Al's whereabouts, and my investigations might lead to something big.

After a run of twenty-eight days I got my man, who had landed up for no apparent reason in a little mining village.

I showed him the locket and asked him point-blank where he'd got it.

He stared at it for a moment. Then he said:

"Why, that used to belong to a kid called Molly Cornish. She gave it to me a year or two ago, and I chucked it away on a girl in Strathcona. I've regretted it ever since I did it, an' I'm real glad to see it again."

"Where was Molly Cornish when she gave you the locket?"

"Let me see, it was a little place near Edmonton, I reckon. Yes, that's where the guy Banner-man—Blood he was always called—left the kid."

Al seemed to be speaking the truth. He was a big, bronzed, frank-looking man, rather different to the evil-faced gunman I had imagined.

"I was interested in that kid," I said, trying to speak calmly, but I couldn't help a slight quiver coming into my voice at the thought of Molly's sweet appealing face.

He looked at me keenly.

"Oh, it was like that, was it?" he said. "Well, you weren't the only one. See here, I'll tell you the whole tale, Mountie, if you'll promise to stop worrying me. I'm not doing any harm up here."

"It was to hear news of the girl that I came," I said simply. "If you'll tell me the truth I promise to leave you alone."

"Let's eat," he suggested, and as I hadn't eaten for about seven hours I agreed. We went to an eating-house and there he told me all he knew about Molly.

I wonder if you'll be able to understand when I tell you that I *knew* that man was telling me the truth. I'm suspicious of people as a rule, till I get to know them. My seven years with the Mounted taught me that. But though it was possible, even

likely, that Al himself had lured Molly away from her home, I believed him when he told me he'd met her first at Edmonton in the company of this man "Blood" Bannerman.

He'd got the whole story from Blood, he said, and as far as he knew it was true.

"Blood was a real bad lot," he said gravely, forgetting that he was supposed to be a bad lot himself. I reckoned that Bannerman must have been a very bad hat to draw that statement from Al.

"Was?" I questioned. "Is he dead?"

"Yes, and a good thing too. He was shot."

I was going to ask him something further about Bannerman. Then I stopped abruptly. From a brief glance at the expression on Al's face, I realised with a shock that I was eating with the man who'd shot Bannerman.

"Tell me about the girl," I said.

He told me that Blood had had a friend who knew Regina and the Cornish family slightly. This friend had given Blood Molly Cornish's address. Blood, who was in the United States at the time, wrote a letter to Molly saying he'd been a secret admirer of hers for years and suggesting that she should run away with him, offering her riches and a good time in return. He had asked the friend to look out for a temperamental, impulsive girl who was likely to fall for such a suggestion. He could have chosen no better person for his purpose than Molly, as I well knew.

She had gone. Al was a bit vague as to how it had all been arranged. But she'd got away secretly and joined this "secret admirer" who was Bannerman, a cad, Al told me, if ever there was one.

He'd given her a good time at first, Al said; but when he first met the pair of them, there was trouble brewing.

Molly wanted Blood to marry her—that was what he'd promised all along. She was surprised, hurt, when he refused brutally. She made Al her confidant. It wasn't long after that that Blood was found shot. . . .

"She was a good kid, that girl," Al said.

He turned to me suddenly.

"See here, Mountie," he said, "I've got something to tell you, something—pretty tough. I ought to have told you right away but I just couldn't. Molly died—only a few months later. Must be nearly two years ago now. No, her child was never born. Guess it was a blessing really."

He laid his brown, hairy hand impulsively on my shoulder.

"Say, I'm sorry, Mountie. But I've told you the truth. It is the truth, I swear it. She—well, I guess she kind o' liked me. She gave me that locket and I treasured it. I cursed myself for giving it to that ogling creature down at Strathcona. I was drunk when I did it."

"Thanks, Al," I said quietly, "for telling me all this. I'd hoped I might see Molly again. But now I guess it's no use pushing investigations any

further. I know all I'm ever likely to know, and I'm not sure that I want to find out any more."

"Say," he began awkwardly, "will you be keeping that locket?"

I gave it to him without a word. After all, he'd been in love with the girl and he'd been kind to her. Although I only had his word for it, I knew he meant what he said.

Soon after that I left him.

"Why not go straight for a bit?" I asked him just as I was leaving.

"Maybe I will."

"Good!"

"But, Mountie, maybe I won't!"

He laughed.

"If you come across that great ugly pal of Smoky Moll's," he yelled after me, "you might tell him I was drunk when he fought me. Otherwise I'd have knocked his——"

His voice faded into the distance. I didn't hear the remainder of his sentence, but I reckon it was pretty colourful!

That was the last I heard of Molly. I didn't follow the case up. I might have looked into the shooting of "Blood" Bannerman, but I had a pretty shrewd idea that Al was responsible for it. I liked Al, and I didn't relish the notion of getting him into trouble.

I liked a crook, a desperate gunman? Yes, I reckon I did. But I know this, that if he committed a crime and I was after him, and I had the chance

of letting him escape, I wouldn't take it. No, not even if I'd been friendly with him all my life.

It's a question of Duty First in the North-West Mounted, and, stern and unflinching to the last, a constable must fulfil the old powerful command of "GET YOUR MAN," or die in the attempt.

CHAPTER VII

WOLVES—AND WORSE!

I

MOST of the large towns in Western Canada have one particular foreign element which dominates all the other many nationalities of which these towns are composed. In my day, for instance, the largest foreign element in Regina was Swedish. In Winnipeg it was German. And so on. And I believe I can safely say that in Edmonton the dominating element was negro. It is possible that I am not strictly correct in this statement, but it always seemed to me that the place was swarming with negroes, and I know that the Mounted Police were always having trouble with them.

One night—it wasn't long after Jackie had turned up at Edmonton—a sergeant and Jackie, myself and another constable had instructions to raid a certain *Sandy's Club* on the outskirts of the town.

It was a dark night, and though the others seemed confident it was going to be a "soft" job, I was not so sure about it. Most of the negroes round that part were pretty tough and game for a fight (especially the type that frequented the clubs).

It was a negro we were after. I forget what he'd done, but I don't think it was anything very serious. Thieving or something of that sort, I think. I knew

his pals would stick by him if he wanted to put up a fight.

It was nearly as cold as it was dark, and that was saying a good deal, for it was a pitch-black night, and it was impossible to see a yard in front of you. The sergeant was cock-sure of himself, and said the whole business would only take a few minutes.

"D'you say so, Sergeant?" Jackie remarked. "Sure though, I wouldn't mind a little fight."

He got it all right. He was going about barracks with a black eye for the rest of the week, and everyone said it improved his looks! It certainly couldn't have made him much uglier.

Sandy's Club came into sight, and about a hundred yards away we paused and considered our plan of campaign.

"I'll go in first," the sergeant announced, "and I'll take one of you in with me. You," pointing to Jackie, "stay in the front entrance to stop anyone who tries to get out, and you, Dyker, feel your way round the house to the back door and station yourself there. You won't have anything to do, but it's as well to be on the safe side."

He looked round at us complacently in the darkness. I could just distinguish his funny tubby little figure very upright on his horse.

"Now, is that clear?"

"Sure, Serg."

"Guess we'll be moving on then."

We dismounted and went forward on foot.

I fumbled my way round to the back of that club,

and then when I'd got there (or thought I'd got there) I couldn't find the back door. I didn't know the place well, and I'd certainly never been round to the back of it before. I clawed my way along by the wall, and then I heard a great tumult somewhere above me.

"Gosh!" I thought. "If I don't find this blamed door soon, and those goldarned negroes start coming out——"

I started to run. Loud shouts and crashes were coming from the first-floor room.

I realised suddenly that I must be feeling my way along the side wall of the place instead of the back. There wasn't the glimmer of a moon to give me my direction. I fairly tore round the corner of the house, scraping the skin off my hand as I did so.

"Who's that?" The loud shout pulled me up with a jerk.

Someone pounced on me and peered into my face.

"What in blazes are you doing, Bob?" asked a voice I knew well.

It was Jackie! I'd reached the front-door instead of the back!

There was a piercing yell from inside. I didn't wait to offer any explanation of my peculiar conduct to Jackie. I just turned and ran. This time I was luckier. I reached the back of the house in about two seconds and had found the back-door, I imagine, almost before Jackie realised I'd left him.

It was just as well I'd been quick. I was still gasping for breath when the sound of hurrying

footsteps came to me. A second later the back-door burst open and a tall, lithe, black figure staggered out.

I drew my revolver and called upon him to stop. He paused, taken aback for a moment. Then, instead of trying to force his way out, he turned round and bolted back the way he'd come. I was surprised at this. I'd expected him to put up a fight, and to tell the truth I was mighty glad he didn't. As I've told you before, a Mounted man is not allowed to shoot except in extreme cases, and I can tell you I wasn't feeling in exactly the right mood for a fight after my little gallop round that confounded house.

However, I wasn't to get off as lightly as I'd hoped. There was still a lot of shouting going on and I thought I could hear the sergeant's voice raised above the rest.

Then some shots rang out, and I gripped my revolver tightly.

So things were getting as bad as that, were they? I itched to get into the Club and see what was happening. For all I knew, the sergeant and his constable might have been shot. Torn between the desire to be in the thick of the trouble and assist my sergeant, and a sense of duty that told me to stick to my post till I received other orders, I walked up and down outside the back-door in agitation.

Loud yells and shouts pierced the air. There were more shots. I rushed to the door and peered into the gloom inside and at that moment several dark forms came flying towards me. I stepped back.

"Stop, or I'll fire!" I yelled, pointing my revolver at them.

But they didn't stop. They were mad with rage. Before I could do anything they fell upon me with fists, feet and knives. I hit out frantically. My revolver fell out of my hand. Someone kicked me on the head and at the same time I felt a violent pain in my stomach. A kind of sickly dizziness crept over me. It wasn't the first time I'd been knocked unconscious, and I realised what was happening. With one last effort I lunged out with my fist and to my satisfaction it met something soft and squishy that I took to be a nose. . . .

After that I heard Jackie's voice, very faint and far away, saying: "Sure, Serg. I'll look after him."

I was surprised to find my eyes were shut. I opened them and found myself lying on a rug in *Sandy's Club*.

"Now just take a good long swig," Jackie was saying. "Guess it'll do you a lot of good."

I swallowed the drink he was offering me, gratefully. Then I took a long look round the room. It was in the most terrible disorder. Broken chairs, bottles, pictures, were strewn about the floor.

"What's happened?" I asked.

But, before he could answer, my brain had cleared and I remembered the whole affair.

"Is serg. all right?" I asked him anxiously.

"Not a scratch," Jackie assured me. "You're the only one who's come off badly."

"Did we get our man?"

"Yep, we got our man."

I found afterwards I'd had a pretty narrow squeak. There was an enormous bump on my head, a pretty deep knife wound in my leg and another in my right arm. However, it wasn't long before I was fit for duty again, and we'd got our man so nothing else mattered. It didn't surprise me very much when I was told that one of the negroes had a broken nose!

II

After witnessing the terrible sight of coyotes mauling a woman I never heard a wolf howl at night without feeling decidedly uncomfortable. I always had a sort of fear at the back of my mind that I might meet the same fate myself, and I very nearly did too! About this time I had an extremely unpleasant experience with wolves. I've been on the brink of losing my life on so many occasions that it's difficult for me to tell which was the nearest escape I've had, but I reckon this was just about as close a shave as I ever had.

It happened at a tiny place on the borders of Saskatchewan about thirty miles North of Vermillion. It was winter. The snow lay thick on the ground.

Poor old Paddy, the horse I was so fond of and who had served me faithfully for so long, had died some months before down at Edmonton. I'd come up here on another horse, but I was destined to be unlucky again, for when the really cold weather set in the animal fell sick and died.

When anything happened like that, it was always a difficult question as to how to dispose of the carcass. On this occasion we decided the best thing to do was to dump it in a place where we knew the wolves and prairie dogs would make short work of it.

Away back of our temporary barracks we had a quantity of dry rubbish and horse manure stacked up, and it was decided that this was the best place to deposit the animal. For this unpleasant job I was selected by a rather disgruntled sergeant.

"It's your horse," he said. "You've got to do the job."

I got out the old chor horse and fastened a long chain to the back of the saddle; the other end of it I attached to the dead animal's feet. By this means the carcass was dragged to the refuse-heap.

I was just undoing the chain when I heard a movement behind me. I turned round quickly and my heart seemed to stop beating. *Standing within a few yards of me were about a dozen of the largest timber-wolves I had ever seen!*

They were facing me quite silently, waiting to spring on the carcass. My heart which a second ago had seemed to stand still now started beating at twice its normal rate (or so it seemed to me). Beads of sweat stood out on my brow as I tried desperately to think out a plan of escape.

We stood there, the hungry wolves and I, staring at each other—silently. It was uncanny, that silence. It got on my nerves until I wanted to shriek and rush through the pack of wolves in a desperate bid for

safety. But I dared not move. I just stood, waiting for the first sign of movement from the wolves.

A little whimpering whinny from the horse brought me to my senses. My brain had been so numbed by the shock of seeing the wolves that I hadn't given a thought to the old horse. If I could mount him and urge him through the wolves, shooting down at them as I went, there was a good chance of getting away. But first I had to finish undoing that chain.

Slowly, never taking my eye off them for one second, I backed away so that I could still face them while undoing the chain. I had my revolver out ready in case they attacked.

My fingers had never before been so clumsy. I saw out of the corner of my eye two of the leaders advancing towards me. Just as I got the chain loose they sprang.

I knew it wasn't me they were after, but I knew very well that if they were hungry enough to approach as close as this they wouldn't hesitate to attack me if anything roused them. Besides there were a dozen of them there and I knew there'd soon be the most unholy fight over the carcass.

I fired. I fired again. The two leaders, the savage gleam in their eyes suddenly extinguished, rolled over at my feet.

I could see the others advancing. There was no fear in this lot, or, if there was, hunger was stronger. A pack of wolves, with its leaders dead, usually becomes cowardly, but these wolves no doubt found

courage in their numbers. There were still about ten of them left.

I leapt on to the old horse and charged through them. I know I accounted for two more with my revolver before we got clear. The horse reared right up in his fright and I nearly slipped off him into the midst of the wolves.

We got clear of them and I started trying to pull the horse up. To my horror he put his head down and galloped all the faster. He was bolting!

Now I reckon I'm about as good with a horse as anyone who's served with the Mounted Police—and that's saying a good deal—but to stop a bolting horse without bridle or gear of any kind besides a saddle is, I think you'll agree, a pretty ticklish job! I didn't realise at first what the trouble was. I thought he'd been scared by the wolves. Of course that had a lot to do with it, but the real trouble was the chain which, still fastened to the back of the saddle, trailed along the snow behind us and beat against the animal's hind legs. It infuriated him.

Clinging tightly with my legs I tried to unfasten the chain but I couldn't manage it and nearly fell when the horse swerved suddenly. He was making for the open prairie and I had not the slightest control of him. I looked downwards at the thick snow swirling past and wondered whether to risk a leap to safety. I decided against it. The snow was soft enough, but going at this pace the chances were that I'd twist an ankle if I did nothing worse. That

would mean a night in the darkness and the snow, with only the wolves for company. . . .

No, that way out was too much of a risk. There was not a soul in sight, and not likely to be. It was getting on for dusk and the district was a lonely one.

As I could not get rid of that infernal chain I decided to try and pull it up, heavy though it was. This wasn't such an easy job as you might imagine. Remember the horse was bolting all this time and I was in perpetual danger of being thrown. At last I got all the chain up, and I made another effort, but without success, to release it from the back of the saddle. I just couldn't remember in what way it was fixed and I wasn't such an expert horseman that I could turn round in the saddle of a bolting horse!

In order to leave my hands free I fastened the chain to my belt and twined it round my waist. Then I concentrated on slowing the horse down. As I'd expected, he seemed less frightened now that the chain wasn't beating against his legs, and he started slowing almost immediately.

I was just congratulating myself on coming well out of a nasty experience when for some extraordinary reason he began to buck and rear like a two-year-old. The energy of that old horse was astounding. He took me completely by surprise, for by then I'd almost brought him to a standstill. I came a sudden cropper in the snow.

This started the old horse off again. He was alarmed by the clanking of the chain and by the sudden absence of a rider. He started off full tilt.

I had fallen flat on my face, and to my amazement and horror, as I heard the old horse snort and take up his galloping again, so I felt the soft snow gliding swiftly from under me. It took me a few seconds before I comprehended the full significance of this, but when I did I felt sick with apprehension.

The chain, fastened to the saddle, was also fastened to me! I tried to unfasten it but it was very heavy and in my fall had got hopelessly twisted round my waist. Travelling at that speed it was an impossibility to get free.

I was chained to a terrified bolting horse in the middle of the lonely snowbound prairie!

For a moment my brain seemed to stop working altogether. I sped over the smooth snow, hearing and seeing nothing save the sound of galloping hooves ahead of me and the sight of the loose snow flying over me as the old horse kicked it up. In that first moment I had no fear. The sensation, on the contrary, was almost a pleasant one—until suddenly my brain cleared and I realised the deadly danger I was in. At any moment I might come into contact with something that was not as soft as the snow, an old snow-plough for instance, or something equally unpleasant, half-buried in the snow. And when I thought of this I can tell you I didn't like the idea of it at all.

But what could I do? I tried to raise myself upright but each time I was jerked forward on to my face again. The snow flew into my eyes and almost blinded me. I hadn't got my full kit on as

I hadn't expected to be out for more than a few minutes. I was feeling desperately tired and I had to fight against a powerful inclination to give way and let myself be dragged to my death or whatever lay in store for me without making any effort to save myself.

But I managed to keep myself continually pulling on the chain because I felt that this would eventually tire the horse and slow him down.

The animal seemed to be possessed of the most fiendish energy. Nothing short of a burst blood-vessel appeared to be going to stop him. I began to relax and flop forward. All the strength had gone out of me. I was "done." The snow was cold and refreshing. The night-wind flew past. The galloping hooves went on . . . and on . . . and on. . . .

I don't know whether I actually lost consciousness, but the next thing I heard was that galloping again, but slower, much slower; it broke into a trot; the horse was definitely slowing. I peered ahead of me and saw the steam rising from his flanks. He was dead-beat.

So was I. But I staggered to my feet and this time was not flung forward again. I managed to get the chain undone and ran forward to the horse's head. He stopped and stood there shivering.

Well, that's about the end of the story. By sheer good fortune I found that I was hardly bruised. My wonderful luck still held!

It was a slow business getting back to headquarters. I daren't take the risk of riding the old

horse, and we just trekked back over our tracks. Mighty peculiar tracks they were too. I wouldn't blame any stranger who chanced to come across them on the same evening for thinking a strange unknown species of animal had passed that way!

I was astounded to find how far we were away. I should say it was a good two miles before we got back to barracks. I wouldn't have believed it possible if it hadn't actually happened to me.

The men were just preparing to send out search-parties for me, but the general opinion was that I had been attacked and dragged away by wolves! I saw some incredulous looks when I told them what had happened, but the state we were both in, I and the old horse, was surely proof enough for them; anyway, I didn't care what they thought; I was dead tired and turned in straight away. I don't think I've ever enjoyed a good night's sleep so much!

CHAPTER VIII

TWO NARROW ESCAPES: TROUBLE ON THE RAILROADS

I

I'm afraid my memory isn't good enough to give you the events of my North-West Mounted career in exactly their right sequence. So much happened to me and so many of my jobs were monotonous ones (judged by North-West standards!) and ones that I had to undertake over and over again, that when I am trying to focus my memory only on to the high-lights of those seven years, I find it difficult always to remember just where and when some of my jobs fitted in. But there is one date I shall never forget and that is the Fifth of June, 1911.

I'm pretty sure it was during the winter of 1911 that I had the narrow escape from the wolves, so it's not out of place to mention the Fifth of June at this point.

I was in Regina. I'd gone all the way back there from Edmonton to train in the N.C.O's class. I wanted to get a stripe, but ill fortune prevented me in the end from getting one.

June 5th was extraordinary for the simple reason that it produced the most astonishing weather that Regina had ever experienced at that season of the year. I wonder how many people remember that day. A good many, I expect. It wasn't a day you'd forget in a hurry!

The temperature dropped with a startling suddenness. Mind you, it had been pretty cold for the time of year for some days before, but an amazing plunge to 40° below zero was totally unexpected, and everyone was taken unawares.

I remember I had to go across to some sheds about fifty yards from the back of the barracks. A howling blizzard had got up and the cold seemed to get into your very bones, no matter how you muffled yourself up. There was a raised boarded way across to the sheds, but the snow was sweeping almost horizontally in great blinding eddies and it was almost impossible to see a foot in front of you.

Great drifts were being blown up against the boards but I managed with great difficulty to get across. Once there I rather foolishly delayed coming back again. The blizzard roared and hissed outside and I was in no particular hurry to go out into it again.

When I did finally struggle out I found conditions were much worse. The boarded way was completely covered, the blizzard was just about as bad as any blizzard I have ever seen, and the cold more intense than I had so far ever experienced.

I plunged into it and had got about ten yards when I discovered to my horror that I couldn't see! The snow had frozen over my eyes. I felt as if they were sealed up with sticking-plaster.

I tore off my glove and with my bare hand tried to scrape away the frozen snow. I got my eyes open a little and saw the line I had to take—it was

marked by a high narrow ridge of snow which covered the boards. Then I plunged my hand quickly back into the glove for my fingers were stiffening in the terrible cold.

As soon as I had done that my eyes were closed again. The blizzard was sweeping straight at me. For a few yards I stumbled blindly on. . . . Then once again I tore my eyes open and caught a brief glimpse of my path.

It may appear unbelievable but at a distance that couldn't have been more than forty yards from the main buildings I couldn't see the faintest outline of them. And when I turned round in desperation contemplating returning the way I had come I found the sheds also were completely blotted from my view. I might have been twenty miles from anywhere instead of a few yards from warm fires and dozens of comrades.

After another brief glimpse ahead of me I plunged forward determined to make as much headway as I could without having to free my eyes again. They were feeling very painful, for my methods of pulling the frozen snow away were crude to say the least of it.

I soon regretted this decision to plunge forward recklessly. I got off my path and in a second found myself up to my shoulders in a huge drift. At first I struggled desperately and only found myself slipping further in. Then I stayed motionless while my brain worked frantically. It was an absurd, almost ludicrous situation. Here was I within a stone's

throw of safety, yet in as nasty a plight as I had ever been in all my life.

What was worse, there was practically no chance of anyone coming out to look for me, at least for some time, for no one knew I had gone to the sheds. As a matter of fact I was disobeying orders in going, for the order had been given that all the men were to remain in barracks until the blizzard dropped. I had disregarded the order, and had only myself to blame for whatever trouble I got into.

I moved my arm slightly. This was easy enough to do for the snow was soft and light, having been blown up in drifts. But the danger of moving was that I was likely to slip, as I had done when I first struggled, still further into the snow, and if I did go much further that would be the end. . . .

But I was feeling for the board which I knew must be pretty close, though perhaps buried a foot or two beneath the surface. I clawed around in the snow, my eyes blind, my body frozen (40° below zero isn't a pleasant temperature when it comes unexpectedly!) but my sense of humour I am glad to say still alive! As I sprawled there almost buried in the drift with one arm feebly feeling around for the touch of something hard—the only thing that could save my life—I suddenly thought how extraordinarily funny it was.

I laughed.

I don't expect you have ever laughed under such difficult circumstances. I never had before, and I don't think I ever have since. The fact is that that

laugh made me lose what little balance I had. The snow slipped from under me. . . . I tried to save myself from plunging deeper in. . . . I fell backwards. . . . My mouth (which was apparently open, perhaps on account of the laugh) received a great dollop of snow. . . . I spluttered. . . . I sprawled. . . . I felt myself sinking, sinking. . . . In a last desperate effort to save my life I flung out both my arms. . . . and to my astonishment and relief my left hand alighted on something hard—a plank of wood.

Desperately I caught hold of it and heaved my self out on to firmer ground. Once out of immediate danger, I sat quite still for a moment. It took me that time to realise that I was still alive! I maintain that it was my sense of humour that saved me on that occasion, for it was my incongruous laugh that sent me sprawling and that made me fling out my *left* hand and find the boards on my *left* side when I had been convinced that they were on my right.

And even if you don't believe that my laugh saved me, you must admit that the moral is a good one. A sense of humour is a great asset to any man, but to a North-West Mounted Policeman it is invaluable. You have to put up with a good deal in the North-West. If you haven't got a sense of humour to carry you along, you'll find life pretty tough.

Well, I got back to barracks all right in the end, but it was a mighty slow business. After my little lesson I went more cautiously, feeling carefully every

step ahead of me. My eyes were stinging and my whole body felt numb. The blizzard showed no sign of abating, and I can tell you I was pretty well done in when I finally staggered back.

An officer passed by and saw me covered with snow from head to foot, and half-blinded, limping along the passage. He didn't reprimand me for going out. He asked no questions. Nor did he express any sorrow at my plight.

"Ah, Constable Dyker, you've been having a bath I see. Rather cold in this weather, isn't it? I shall soon see you with a stripe I hope."

He passed on.

It wasn't for me to tell him I'd just escaped death by the skin of my teeth. If I had he'd have merely made a sarcastic remark. But I bore him no grudge for this. On the contrary, I thought him a good fellow for not ticking me off for disobeying orders.

"I hope I shall soon see you with a stripe," he'd said. But fate stepped in and ordained that he should not. Perhaps I'd never have got it anyway. I don't know. I was never given a chance to know.

The weather improved after a day or so, and the first day of our examination was drawing near, when the accident occurred.

I don't know why I blamed fate just now; it was my own fault. There was a very obstreperous bronc belonging to the barracks, and he'd been throwing everyone right and left. No one would ride him. He was a nasty tempered little brute, and cunning as a lazy bad-tempered horse can be.

I said I'd ride him. I don't know why. Perhaps it was conceit. Perhaps it was over-confidence. Perhaps sheer devilment. But whatever it was I said I'd ride him, and having once said it I couldn't go back on my word.

The story, I'm afraid, is a short one. I'd like to be able to tell you of the gallant way in which, though continually thrown, I leapt to his back again, in the manner of little Puggy many years back in the same barrack-square. But unfortunately I must stick to the plain sad truth.

No sooner had I mounted him than he flung up his hindlegs. I clung to him desperately, because I'd hardly got my seat. But I'd often dealt with bucking horses and I didn't see why I shouldn't succeed with this one. He bucked and reared and pranced as if he were possessed.

I still clung to him. I felt that once he'd thrown me I'd never be able to get on to him again. If I was to succeed (and I was determined to do that) I must somehow stick on.

But a devil seemed to possess that animal. I've never in all my experience seen a horse rear so high and so savagely as this one. There was quite a crowd watching us, and someone called out that I'd already stayed on him longer than anyone had done for months. I felt I was going to master him.

But I didn't. He died, poor animal, undefeated to the end. He reared up in one last wild effort to unseat me. I felt myself falling backwards, and *to my horror felt the horse falling backwards too!*

I had one glimpse of the sky swirling above me and of sweating horseflesh blotting it out. I twisted my body in the air in a desperate bid to throw myself clear of the animal.

Then I felt a blinding pain in my left arm. I was aware of the horse writhing on the ground beside me. He was kicking out with his hooves. I rolled away from him, though it was agony to do so.

I didn't lose consciousness; I heard them come running to pick me up, and I heard them shoot the horse. In fact I was sufficiently energetic to speak to one of the men as he carried me in.

"Shouldn't be surprised if his back's broken," he said to his mate. He was young and had probably only just started his training. He was obviously enjoying the excitement of the affair.

"Don't be a damned fool!" I burst out indignantly opening my eyes wide. "Back broken indeed! If you can't stop talking rubbish you'd better stop talking altogether."

I didn't say any more because I felt quite exhausted after that, and my arm was hurting a lot.

But the man was so surprised that he stared at me open-mouthed and nearly dropped me. He'd evidently given me up for dead the moment he saw the horse rear over.

Well, surprising though it may seem, the only serious thing wrong with me was a broken arm. I was badly bruised and got a slight touch of concussion, but that was all, and I think you'll agree

I got off pretty lightly. My good luck was holding. I was beginning to wonder how long it would last!

The chance of getting a stripe had gone, for I was laid up, of course, for some weeks. I didn't really mind very much. I never was a man who cared much for outward signs. If the heart's in the right place you can wear rags and be just as much of a man. If the heart's in the wrong place no amount of stripes and badges will make any difference.

I'd gone up for this examination mainly because I thought it showed signs of keenness, and of course I was a bit sick at wasting all this time over nothing. Still, I never grumble much when things go against me. Perhaps that's why the luck's usually on my side.

As soon as my arm was mended I was back again at Edmonton, refusing the extra sick-leave they offered me. I didn't want it. I wanted to get on with my job. I felt perfectly fit again, fit enough I thought, to tackle a dozen criminals single handed!

II

It was always my ambition to get away from the railroads. The railroads, to my mind, marked the end of civilisation. Once you got North of them you were getting into the wilds, where life was a grimmer, tougher affair altogether. Why I wanted that sort of life, I don't know, but I was young, and that explains a lot.

But before I was moved further North I had some quite exciting experiences connected with the railroads, mostly in the Edmonton district and it wouldn't be out of place to relate some of them now.

I think I've mentioned to you one or two of the fights I've had, but the one I'm just going to tell you about was I think the biggest I ever had. It was certainly the one I remember most clearly because of the peculiar circumstances in which it was fought.

There had been a number of robberies on one of the big Canadian expresses that passed through, and I was detailed to get the man. We suspected a particular man—Bob Mobey he was called—and my job was not a very difficult one. Mobey wasn't very intelligent, for he practised his pick-pocketing art a lot too often and always on the same train. He didn't bring enough variety to his game!

He must have been pretty cute, however, for he'd been stopped at one of the big stations some weeks before and searched as a suspicious character, but nothing was found on him, though some of the passengers had definitely been robbed. Now, provided it *was* Mobey—and we were pretty sure of that—what had he done with the money? How had he got rid of it?

It was decided the only thing to do was to send a constable on the train to catch Mobey red-handed. The job was given to me.

I went once, and Mobey wasn't on the train. I went again, and this time soon spotted him. I was

convinced, after observing him from time to time, that he was practising a number of robberies. He kept changing his seat and moving up and down the corridor.

When we were only a mile or two from Edmonton he went down the corridor again, glanced around, and then walked along to the wash-room at the end. I suddenly had an idea of what he was going to do. I just wanted to make quite certain, so I hurried along into the next coach and looked out of the window.

Sure enough as I looked out I saw a small bundle tied up in a pretty useful-sized handkerchief go flying from the train to the edge of the line; it rolled along for a few yards and came to rest against the track. I marked the spot as best I could for the country round there all looks much alike, and then I strolled along the corridor to see what Mobey was doing.

He had just come out of the wash-room and had settled down to read innocently in a corner. I was pretty certain that that little bundle he had thrown from the window contained a fat wallet or two, and I wondered how he would remember the exact spot where it had fallen. Then I remembered that he had probably done this hundreds of times before, and as likely as not threw his bundle from the train at the same spot each time.

The train slowed as it entered Edmonton station and I noticed Mobey preparing to get out. I got out too, and followed him out of the station. He

did not immediately return along the line to retrieve his precious bundle, but went instead to a little café where he sat down and ordered a coffee.

I decided my best plan would be to go along the line and if possible locate the bundle and lie in wait for him there. I thought it unlikely that he would waste very much time before going there for fear some hobo would come across it.

I trekked across country and struck the line about half a mile outside the town. I walked on another half-mile until I thought I was near the spot where Mobey had thrown the bundle, but I could find no trace of it and nor could I distinguish any of the landmarks I had made a mental note of. This was not really very surprising as the country was very bare and only broken by little patches of Bush that all looked very much the same. I decided it must be a little further on and continued on my way.

After walking another quarter-of-an-hour, however, I suddenly realised that it couldn't possibly have been as far back as this, and turned about. I was furious with myself for passing the spot (for that was what I decided I must have done). For all I knew Mobey might have been only a short distance behind me and had already got the bundle and made off with it. All my energies would have been wasted, and the chance of bringing off a good coup gone!

I walked back in a thoroughly bad temper but fortunately remembered to keep my eyes skinned

for any sign of those miserable landmarks which I had so dismally failed to see, and of Mobey himself. I saw Mobey when he was still a good way off and so had plenty of time to hide myself. I was lucky in being near some cover. He was walking at a good speed and soon came up to me. He passed on his way without so much as a glance to either side. He evidently knew exactly where he was going.

I was still in a thoroughly bad temper, and at the same time puzzled and exasperated to know what he was doing. Had he already picked up the bundle? Was he making off with it in the opposite direction? It seemed to me extremely unlikely, but at the same time it was unlikely that the bundle was further up the line for I had already been at least half-a-mile further up, if not more, and had seen no sign of it. However, the only thing to do was to follow him at a safe distance and hope for the best.

I followed, keeping well under cover whenever it was possible and keeping a long way behind so that if he did spot me he would not be able to distinguish who it was. But there wasn't much need for precautions of this kind for he didn't appear to look round once. He just went steadily on keeping straight along the line.

We covered a mile and I recognised the spot where I had turned back. Still he went on. Two miles. Three. I was feeling absolutely furious by this time, as you can imagine, and I had almost

decided to catch up with him and arrest him, banking on him having got the stolen money on him, when he suddenly stopped and looked about him. Then he stooped down and picked something off the ground. I started to run towards him, at the same time taking note of my surroundings. I noticed to my chagrin that this was the spot I had seen from the train. There were the familiar landmarks which I had been looking for all these hours in vain. I had made no mistake about those. But I had made a very serious mistake about the distance from Edmonton. It was nearer four miles than one.

I saw that Mobey was examining the contents of his bundle and I paused about a hundred yards away from him and hid behind a bush. I hoped he would return the way he had come and I could then leap out and arrest him. But instead of coming back he went a little way from the track and settled himself down on the ground, either to have a snooze or to count his ill-gotten gains. I advanced towards him.

I was almost on him before he saw me and he hadn't a chance. He leapt to his feet, but I had the handcuffs on him before he could do anything.

"I guess you've won, Mountie," he acknowledged ruefully.

"Let's have a look and see what you've got in that bundle," I suggested.

Without a word he watched me take four fat wallets from his lap.

"It was a good haul too," he remarked with regret

in his voice. "Well, hadn't we better be getting back?"

"There's no hurry," I told him. "I'm tired. We'll stay here for a bit."

"Care for a game of cards?" he suggested. "I've got a pack in my pocket."

"Those handcuffs are staying on," I said grimly. I was still feeling a bit bad-tempered.

After that the man gave me no peace. He talked incessantly, and mostly about the cowardice of the police and me in particular.

"It's all very fine for you," he grumbled. "You've got all the advantages on your side. But all the police are cowards when it comes to the point. If you met me on the level somewhere I'd knock the guts out of you."

"A swell chance you'd have of that," I said angrily. "I'd beat you in a straight fight any day."

The man was hefty but I believed I could beat him. I'd done a good bit of boxing and there weren't many people I couldn't lick.

"Oh, you're brave enough when I've got the handcuffs on," he sneered.

I didn't reply. It was no use getting annoyed by this fellow. He was taunting me on purpose, and I was determined not to fall for it.

"Guess we'll be moving on now," I said.

He talked incessantly all the way, and continued his sneering at the Force.

"It's easy to be brave when the other man can't use his fists," he sneered over and over again.

Suddenly I could stand it no longer. I like fair play—I can't bear an injustice of any sort—and he touched me on the raw. I stopped dead.

"All right," I said. "I'll fight you."

He stared at me with open mouth in blank amazement. He couldn't believe his ears.

"Say that again."

"I'll fight you," I repeated.

"You're a sport," he said wonderingly.

"First I'd just like to know if you've got a gun," I said, remembering I ought to have found that out long ago.

"I don't carry one," he said. "Feel me if you like."

I searched him. I wasn't taking any more chances than I could help. Already I was beginning to regret my rash decision, but I couldn't go back on it now.

"I haven't got one, have I, Mountie," he grinned. "I don't carry such things. It's only the Police who need 'em because they've never been taught how to use their fists."

"Well, *I've* got one," I reminded him, ignoring his taunt. "And if there's any funny business you'll soon know it."

"All right, Mountie, I'll play fair."

I undid his handcuffs and we set to.

That man could fight! And he had everything to gain and nothing to lose, while I had nothing to gain except perhaps a little prestige and everything to lose. If he knocked me out it would be a clean

get-away for him, and I'd be left in a mighty awkward position.

I got a straight left to his eye that would turn it black soon, and which nearly closed it up. My nose was bleeding furiously. But still we went at it. How long the fight went on I shouldn't like to say, but we were at it hammer-and-tongs without a breather for what seemed like hours, and was certainly a very long time. The North-West keeps a man fit, otherwise neither of us could have stood it for half as long as we did.

I've been long enough telling this story so I'll bring it quickly to a close. I won that fight, but not without a terrific tussle, and there were moments when I thought the game was up. But finally I felled him like an ox with a tremendous uppercut. I put my last ounce of strength into that blow for I knew it was my last effort. If I didn't get him then, it would be I who would go under.

For a second or two he lay as if unconscious. Then he came round and stared up at me sullenly.

"All right, you've won, Mountie," he said for the second time that day.

Then he twisted his face into a kind of a grin.

"Aren't we going to shake? You're a sport, Mountie."

I grasped his hand firmly. I liked him for that.

It was some time before we continued our journey and both of us looked a little the worse for wear. Mobey refrained from sneering any more. In fact

he talked quite pleasantly, and I guessed he'd just put on that sneering attitude to make me fight him.

I took him back to barracks, and just as I was leaving him he shook me again by the hand.

"Say, thanks for the chance, Mountie," he said. "Not many men would have done that."

"Most Mounted Policemen would," I told him. "And I'm sure you'd have done the same if you'd been in my position and I'd been in yours."

"I wonder," he said thoughtfully.

I could see he hadn't thought of it that way before.

Whenever I start talking about the railroads I am always reminded of a man whom I shall call Constable X. He was, I think I am pretty safe in saying, the most notorious constable in the Force. He had been a sergeant four times, but for various offences he had had his stripe taken away from him on each occasion. Frankly, I don't know what the offences were, but he was as wild as the North-West itself, and no doubt he often behaved in too wild a way for the decorum of the barracks.

But whatever his faults he was a great man, and a great constable. When I knew him he was a veteran of twenty-five years' service, and of course we youngsters would sit around open-mouthed for hours on end while he yarned to us.

I remember him in connection with the railroads because of the famous occasion which I expect practically every North-West Mounted man has

heard of, when he brought twenty-five criminals back single-handed, twenty-four alive and one dead!

Constable X was the most famous man in the Force for getting his man. He had never been known to fail in all the twenty-five years of his service. He was as hard as nails, and was feared by every wrongdoer throughout the length and breadth of the North-West.

On this occasion he brought in, in twos and threes, the first twenty-four men he was after, but the twenty-fifth eluded him completely. For six months he was after that man. He would rather have died, he told us, than give up. And at last he got him.

He made a journey by sleigh and train, as he had done with all the others, and once in the train with the man, he was able, he told us, to relax for the first time since he'd captured him. If ever a man was a menace that fellow was. It was necessary to keep an eye on him the whole time, for he was desperate and would hesitate at nothing to escape.

When he asked for permission to go to the cloak room the constable went along with him, determined to take no risks, and waited outside in the corridor for him. He began to get anxious when a long time passed without the man reappearing. He remembered the criminals' words:

"You'll never get me back."

And his own:

"I have never failed yet."

Time passed, and he decided to bash the door in.

He found the man hanging by his braces. He was still warm, but dead.

Frantically, with the aid of the guard, he tried to revive him, but it was no use.

Constable X got his man back all right, but he was dead; and he told us he never forgave himself for not exercising more care.

Constable X was a cold, stern man, unfortunately liable to periods of excitement and wild behaviour which was the reason presumably why he never got on. But he was a good man for us younger ones to model ourselves on. He had guts if ever a man had, and terrific tenacity. I for one will never forget him, or his story of the twenty-fifth man whom he brought home dead.

When travelling in a train with a criminal I always remembered that story, and watched my man with a hawk-like vigilance.

One other story of the railroads before I close this chapter.

I was after a man one day for stealing two cows.

I had definite information as to who this man was, and I called at a farm apparently owned by some friends of his where he had last been seen.

I banged on the door and a tall, lean-looking man opened it after a few minutes' delay.

"I want to have a word with Dave Forrest," I said to him, looking him straight in the face, "I fancy he's been staying here the last day or two."

"I know of no Dave Forrest."

"I have a warrant for his arrest," I said. "And I know he's here. You won't help him by concealing him. If you don't give him up, I shall have to search the house."

"Oh, no offence meant," said the old man, piercing me with a keen blue eye. "Come in, sir, come in."

I walked through into a hall that was spick-and-span. The whole house smelt fresh and clean, and I guessed it was the result of a woman's care.

"Your wife?" I queried. "Is she at home?"

"Ah, my wife," he gestured vaguely. "A very busy woman. No doubt she will be with us presently."

He seemed a cultured well-spoken man for a farmer and I liked him.

I'd been bluffing, of course, when I said I knew Dave Forrest was in the house. Actually he had last been seen in the vicinity of the house some days ago, and even then I was not certain that my information was correct.

Now that I saw what the owner of the farm was like and guessed what his wife must be like from the trim appearance of the place, I began to have serious doubts. It seemed to me extremely unlikely that these good people would harbour a man who, though never before known in this part of the country, was well-known in parts of Saskatchewan and Manitoba as a thief and general bad hat.

However, I had to see the thing through now that I'd got into the place, and apologetically I asked him if he'd object to my beginning a search straight away.

"I won't hear of it," he replied with a twinkle in his eye. "I'm having a cup of tea in the parlour now, and I shall be offended if you won't join me."

"Well, I ought to be getting along soon," I said doubtfully.

"I guess you're pretty tired," he said. "You can search the house now if you like. But I tell you straight you won't find Dave Forrest on these premises. I'm reckoned a pretty truthful man round these parts, you know."

I believed him.

"Look here," I said. "As a matter of form I shall have to search your place. But I'll drink a cup of tea with you with pleasure—I reckon I am pretty tired—and I hope your wife will join us."

We sat down in the parlour and talked for a few minutes. I wondered vaguely why no tea was forthcoming, and why he hadn't even told his wife that I was here. The farmer himself seemed to be getting a bit anxious I thought, but it may have been because I was keyed up and keen to get finished a job I didn't relish—that of searching the house of these obviously respectable citizens.

At last I heard footsteps coming down the passage outside the door. The farmer looked up, and I saw something that startled me—perspiration was streaming from his brow, but the day was a cold one.

Suddenly suspicious, I leapt behind a great chest standing in a corner of the room hoping that, if these people really did know anything about the hunted

man, the woman would give herself away, thinking I wasn't in the room.

What I would have done if she had behaved perfectly normally, I can't imagine. But I didn't think of that. I just acted on impulse. The perspiration on the farmer's forehead had definitely roused my suspicions. It looked as if he were labouring under some mental strain. The inferences were obvious.

The woman burst into the room, took a hurried glance, and gasped:

"Oh, has he gone? I thought I saw his horse still outside. Dave's got away all right, thank Heaven. He's got plenty of food to last him. He's taken the short-cut through to the railway-line. He thinks he may be able to jump a train. . . ."

She stopped short, no doubt alarmed at the agonised look on her husband's face.

I stepped out of my hiding-place rather shamefacedly, but somewhere inside me was a feeling of triumph that I was within an ace of getting my man.

The woman—she was a short plump little thing with a pleasant face—turned deathly white when she saw me. Then she turned and went for me hammer-and-tongs.

I held her arms down to her sides, and a vision flashed across my memory of doing the same thing to a girl, a sweet girl, Mary Harding, in the far-away days in Toronto.

Her husband came across to help me.

"It's no use, going on like that, dear," he said. "This constable has to do his duty. Though I must say," he added with a flash of anger, "I didn't expect him to stoop to such a low trick as this!"

I flushed.

"You said you were a truthful man," I retorted. "Yet you told me I would not find Dave Forrest on these premises."

"No more you would," he said. "My wife hustled him away when we saw you coming."

His wife, who was sobbing, looked up sharply, her mouth drawn in a resolute line.

"And anyway his name isn't Dave Forrest," she said emphatically.

The old man lifted up his hand in a gesture of protest. But the woman ignored him.

"No, let me go on," she almost shouted, "He might as well know the whole truth now."

She turned to me. I wondered whether I ought to let her go on speaking, whether I oughtn't rather to hurry off in immediate pursuit of my man. But I decided that a few minutes one way or another wouldn't make any difference. I was certain of getting him if he was making for the railroad, as he was on foot and I was mounted. I listened to what the woman had to say. And her first words amazed me.

"He's our son," she burst out. "That's why we're trying to protect him. His name isn't Forrest. It's Mortimer—our name. He's always run wild, and we hadn't seen him for years—he was always

over Manitoba way—but we'd heard he'd got into trouble once or twice. . . .”

She paused, finding it difficult to control her sobs. The old man sat in moody silence gazing down at the scrupulously scrubbed floor.

“Three days ago he came back . . . asked us to take him in again . . . said he was sorry he'd been wayward . . . he didn't tell us he was wanted by . . . the police. Then this morning he confessed. What could we do? What would you have done? We stood by him, of course. Then we saw you coming. I rushed and told him, gave him food to take with him. . . . Well, you know the rest.”

She paused.

“I'm sorry,” I said. “It's hard on you. But, you know, stealing a couple of animals is not a terribly serious offence. . . .”

But even as I was speaking I realised the futility of my words.

Suddenly she ran forward and clung to me.

“Don't go after him. Let him go. It's nothing to you. It's everything to us. Say you've lost him, that he's gone out of the country. They'll believe you. Please. . . .”

She broke off, the tears streaming down her face.

I wavered, but only for a second. I was a constable of the North-West Mounted and I knew the line I had to take.

“I'm sorry,” I said again, “very sorry. But I must do my duty. Please try to forgive me.”

I walked towards the door as steadily as I could. As I was going out I glanced back. The old man nodded his head slightly to me. I thought it meant that he understood. I don't know whether it did, but I like to think so.

I mounted my horse and turned her head to the back of the farmhouse to see if I could find the short cut to the railway-line. It would take a good deal longer to go right round, and I had wasted enough time as it was.

I found the short cut with no delay at all, and cantered down it towards the railway, which I judged to be about half-a-mile distant. I reached the line in a few minutes and reckoned I couldn't be very far behind my man. Sure enough I saw a figure about half-a-mile further on down the line.

He must have seen me almost as soon as I saw him for he was running full tilt when I got near enough to see him distinctly. I had no doubt at all it was the man I wanted, and I was just getting the handcuffs ready, thinking the job was as good as over, when I noticed that about a hundred yards ahead of him, a big Canadian express was stationary on the up-line taking in water or coals or something. I spurred my horse to a gallop in an endeavour to catch the man before he reached the train, but the animal tripped badly on a loose piece of turf and I had to pull her up abruptly.

That gave him just the extra second or two he wanted, and he reached the train in safety. I galloped up, and then dismounted, tethering my

horse hastily to a tree, and ran after him on foot.

I naturally thought he would get into the train in the hope that it would start before I could get to it, but he didn't. He kept steadily to the side of the track and didn't seem to be going to take advantage of his luck at all.

It looked as if the train was going to start. The engine gave a blast. . . .

I was then about twenty yards behind him and gaining on him rapidly for I was fresh and he had probably run most of the way from the farm. He suddenly swerved violently in his headlong rush and made straight for the train.

I prepared to leap into one of the carriages if he should do the same, but instead he dived straight under the engine in the middle of the train. Most of the big Canadian expresses have an engine in the middle in addition to the one in front, but for the moment I had forgotten that, and anyway I was quite unprepared for a development like this. There was some thick Bush on the other side of the line, and I realised that once he got into this it would be very difficult to catch him. The man had been extraordinarily cunning.

But I hadn't time to stop and consider the question. Without hesitation I dived under the engine after him.

And at that crucial moment, when I was well under the engine, the train began to move!

There was no hope of scrambling out. I should

have been crushed by one of the wheels. There was only one possible thing to do.

I flung my arms round the axle and let myself be dragged along the track, at the same time shrieking at the top of my voice in the vain hope that someone would hear me.

Who was there to hear me? I had seen no passengers in the train. It was apparently only filling up before steaming into the station to begin its journey, or perhaps it had finished its journey for the day and was going to one of the sheds. I knew nothing of the goings and comings of the trains. I didn't even know what patch of the line I had struck. All I knew was that there was a roaring in my ears and a terrible rattling and shaking that seemed to be grinding my body to bits. I felt as if my whole body was one huge bruise.

My head throbbed . . . I thought it was going to burst . . . I felt sick . . . and giddy . . . and the train gathered speed.

CHAPTER IX

THE DOUKHOBORS: WHISKY AND THE GIRL

I

I'VE talked a good deal about my luck in the course of this book, and I really believe I have had more than my ordinary share of good fortune. But on this occasion you must admit I had the most incredible bad luck that ever the fates served out to a man.

The chances against the train moving off in that one second when I was under the engine must have been about one in a million, though of course it was what Dave Forrest (or Mortimer) hoped would happen. At that moment all the luck was definitely on his side.

However, it wasn't long before I got my share. If I hadn't got it, believe me I shouldn't be here to-day to tell the tale. As it was, it was a miracle I wasn't killed.

I was dragged a hundred yards under that engine, and then to my intense relief the train slowed and stopped with a jerk. I scrambled out and fell sprawling and half-unconscious on the track. My whole body ached terribly. I lay quite still for a moment, gasping.

Then I heard a shout and looked up to find the train shunting back again and the fireman leaning out and yelling to me:

"Anything wrong?"

I suddenly remembered then that I was after a man. Precious time must not be lost.

"No," I called out. "I'm all right."

Then, though aching in every limb, I started running towards the bush. I glanced back, saw the train disappearing from sight, and saw my mare still waiting patiently for me. It was no good going back for her.

The train had evidently merely been shunting. If it hadn't been. . . . But there was no time to think of that. I had important business in hand. I had to get my man.

And I got him. He was as exhausted as I was; more so I think, for in the excitement of the chase I forgot all about my bruises and seemed to get new energy.

I won't weary you with a description of the chase. It was much like many other chases I have described, except that both pursuer and pursued were more exhausted at the end than was the case in any other capture I can remember.

I'm afraid I was pretty rough with the man when I did get him. You see, I was thinking of a tall upright old farmer and of a mother sobbing her heart out over a worthless son.

II

Though I have called this part of the book *Alberta and the Frozen North* I find myself constantly remembering incidents that, though occurring in this period,

took place in another State. The incidents at Regina are an instance of this.

And now I am going to tell you of the Doukhobors and take you over the borders of Saskatchewan again, for these strange people settled in Northern Saskatchewan.

I expect you have heard something of the Doukhobors before now. They are a strange Russian sect, very religious—I believe they practise a religion that is something like the Quakers'—and after suffering terrible persecution in their native country they migrated to Canada, and were given grants of land by the Government in Northern Saskatchewan. Sometimes they are called Spirit-Wrestlers.

They turned out to be very good farmers and were altogether a well-conducted crowd. But where they came up against the police was in the practice of their nudist cult. At least it wasn't exactly a nudist cult; it was more than that, it was part of their religion, and apparently a very vital part.

It only happened at a certain time of the year. I think they judged the season by the moon, like our movable feasts, or something of that sort. Anyway no one ever seemed to know when this nudist business was going to start. Apparently the idea at the back of it all was that they must discard and destroy everything earthly.

I happened to be up near the borders of Saskatchewan one year when news came through that the Doukhobors had started discarding their clothes, and

that detachments of police were to be sent at once to try and bring them to their senses.

It was bitterly cold weather and I marvelled to think what some people would stand for the sake of their religion. But as it *was* their religion I didn't quite see why the Mounted Police should interfere.

"Surely," I said to a pal of mine, "they can do what they like. It's nothing to do with us if they like to take all their clothes off."

"I suppose it would be all right," he answered, "if they kept entirely to themselves but they have to mix up with a lot of ordinary people who naturally object violently, and when they complain to the police we're bound to step in to try and put a stop to it. And, again, if the weather's severe a lot of them get seriously ill, going about naked in the open when they're not accustomed to it. They're a public nuisance and it's our job to make them behave like ordinary citizens."

There was truth in what he said and I hadn't many qualms left by the time we set off on our strange task.

The sergeant-in-charge, who had had experience of the Doukhobors before, only took two of us along with him.

"They'll soon knuckle under," he assured us. "The last time I was on a job of this kind a blizzard got up soon after we arrived on the spot, and they seemed only too pleased to get into their clothes again. They're a funny lot."

He chuckled at the thought of it. But all I can say is the sergeant must have struck a pretty poor crowd of Doukhobors on that occasion if what he told us was true, for the Doukhobors we had to contend with were made of very different mettle.

When we arrived in the district there they all were dancing and singing and marching up and down stark naked. It was the most ridiculous sight I ever saw and I wondered how on earth we were going to set about clothing all this lot.

We dismounted and, to begin with, the sergeant tried to reason with them, but they didn't understand, or wouldn't, and all they did was to carry on with their absurd quick-marching up and down, singing and chanting at the same time.

They hadn't a scrap of clothing between them. The sergeant scratched his head and looked around him with an expression of comical perplexity on his face.

"What are we going to do with them?" he asked despairingly. "They won't take any notice of me."

I laughed. I couldn't help it. He looked so funny standing there in the midst of all these naked people none of whom would take the slightest notice of anything he said.

"Well, it's not much use laughing like that," he said indignantly. "Perhaps you can think of a good way of bringing these people to their senses, Constable Dyker?"

I couldn't, but fortunately all the Doukhobors suddenly started moving off in one direction, and I

was saved from making some fatuous suggestion that would only have infuriated the sergeant more.

"Where, in the name of all that's wonderful, are they going to now?" the sergeant muttered distractedly.

We mounted our horses and rode through the naked people to the leaders. Here the sergeant was able for the first time to get some intelligible information. Apparently they were making for a village two or three miles distant, and this was one of the villages from which complaints had come to the Police.

"Look here, boys," the sergeant said. "We've got to prevent these guys from going there, or if they do go they must be properly clothed. Constable Dyker, go ahead for all you're worth to this village and see what you can get hold of in the way of old clothes. It doesn't matter how old they are as long as they're clothes of some sort. Get someone to give you a hand and bring 'em back on a farm-waggon. We'll stay here and try to prevent these people from getting any further. But be quick!"

I galloped off and soon got to the village. At first I had some difficulty in getting hold of any clothes, but I eventually managed to get a strange assortment, mostly rags. I returned in triumph with my waggon-load.

By this time they'd got much nearer to the village, and the sergeant and constable were having a hard time trying to stop them.

We had a talk together to discuss the best method of getting them to see reason, and we finally decided

the best thing to do was forcibly to dress one or two of the men in the hope that the others would follow suit rather than come to grips with us.

Easier said than done. We grabbed hold of a couple of men, but they struggled like eels. The farm-labourer came to our assistance and in the end after about ten minutes hard tussling we managed to get some clothes on to them. None of the other Doukhobors came to their assistance. Each man's religion was, I suppose, a concern of his own, and the others no doubt didn't see why they should be mixed up in a struggle that, for the moment, at any rate, didn't concern them. Nor did the two men, once they were dressed, start taking off their clothes. They appeared to have acknowledged defeat.

It looked as if we should have to clothe the whole lot, however, for though the sergeant again appealed to them to see reason, they took not the slightest notice of him and once more set up their chanting. The sergeant was not used to being ignored, and he didn't like it. He swore, and set to with renewed vigour to clothe some more of these peculiar people.

Altogether I suppose we clothed about a dozen or so, and then suddenly they all made a bee-line for the waggon and started scrummaging for the remainder of the garments. What motive prompted them to give in so suddenly, I don't know. The women, maybe, were alarmed lest all the best clothes should be gone before their turn arrived, but perhaps I am being rather cruel in suggesting that,

for I think they all took their religion much too seriously to consider the merits and demerits of clothes at such a crisis. The Doukhobors, I have always heard and I've never had any reason to doubt it, are a deeply-religious, sober-minded race with just this unfortunate kink about giving up earthly possessions which brings them up against the Police.

I must say when they were all dressed they were just about the funniest sight I've ever seen in my life. They looked like a lot of scarecrows, for none of the clothes fitted properly, and the fact that they were so serious about it all made the whole business far funnier.

As far as I know the Doukhobors still practise the nudist cult, and no doubt the North-West Mounted are still called in to make them clothe themselves.

III

In 1911 I was mostly up and around Athabaska Landing. You see, although at times I had to dodge about here there and everywhere, I was gradually working North, and that was all to my liking.

There's a girl in this story I'm just going to tell you, the last girl I ever had anything to do with during my North-West days. I told you that the three little love-affairs I had in those seven years all ended unfortunately. Well, this was the last of them, and though things didn't end as tragically as they did in the case of Molly Cornish, yet I felt pretty cut up when I realised I would never see the girl again and that she hated me.

Her name was Martha Baker, and she was a very nice Scottish Canadian girl. I say "very nice" intentionally because that is exactly the way I described her to myself when I first saw her, and the way I've thought of her ever since. She was "very nice" in every way. Not a soft, delicate townish sort of girl, not a girl who was everything lovely on the outside but very different when you get below the surface—like so many girls I've met—not a girl who knew she was beautiful, though, Lord knows, she must have been told it often enough, not a girl—Oh, I could go on endlessly telling you the kind of girl she wasn't. Suffice it to say that she never did an underhand thing, that she was a straightforward, honest girl, with a look of the open-air about her, a fresh look of the country as though she had never known what it was to be cooped up between the four walls of a house. Martha, in short, was a thoroughly nice girl.

For a long time I saw her on the quiet. This, let me tell you, was not through any wish of mine. I wanted to meet her father and have everything above board, but for some reason Martha always put me off, and weeks fled by without me seeing the old man. I began to think that her relations with him might perhaps be strained, but she would often talk of him so affectionately that I dismissed this idea from my mind as being impossible. The old man was a farmer who earned a bare living a little way South of Athabaska, but when I was with a detachment up there I used to take every possible

opportunity of getting over to see her or of meeting her at some prearranged spot. Sometimes she would come over to Athabaska Landing.

The woods around Athabaska are infested with wolves and I had one or two rather nasty experiences there, but I shall never finish this book if I tell you everything that happened to me, so I'll have to leave them unrecorded.

I never really thought of the danger of wolves, however, until Martha appeared in Athabaska one day looking a bit scared, and said she'd been attacked by a couple of the brutes but had got away after shooting one of them dead. (She always carried a gun.)

After that I tried to stop her from going about so much by herself, and the only sure method of doing that seemed to be for me to go about with her! So all my off-duty hours were spent with her, and very happy hours they were too.

In Athabaska there was a small drinking-place that wasn't supposed to sell anything stronger than cider, but everybody knew it was really a Blind Pig (a place where you could get stronger drink if you were in the know).

For some time the Police had been trying to discover where they got their supplies, and I and another constable were given the job of finding out anything we could about it.

We kept a close watch on the place and after some weeks' investigation, picking up a clue here and there, we were reluctantly forced to come to the

conclusion that suspicion definitely rested on Baker. My pal wanted to go over straight away and search the farm, but I managed to dissuade him from such swift action.

"It can't be Baker," I protested. "He's a very respectable sort of farmer. He wouldn't go in for this sort of thing?"

"Oh no? A lot you know about it. What sort of a living does he make? Rotten. Yes, he's a respectable man all right, but they're just the sort that go in for this kind of thing. He's got to supplement his income somehow, and what better method could he find? I'm ready to wager it's him. Anyway how do you know so much about him?"

"Well, Martha——" I began.

He threw back his head and roared with laughter.

"Oh, Martha. I forgot about her. Yes, I suppose she makes a difference. Anyway, I don't believe you know old Baker at all. Have you ever met him?"

I'd seen the old man often enough, but I had to confess I'd never actually met him.

"Then how on earth do you know what sort of a man he is?"

The question was unanswerable. I didn't know.

"It's absurd to say Martha makes any difference," I said, but even as I spoke the words I knew they weren't true.

"Look here," I continued. "Don't let's do anything for three days. If at the end of that time we're still certain Baker's our man then we'll go through with it."

I was the senior man and he agreed to my suggestion, though rather dubiously. And there for the moment the matter rested.

I saw Martha the same day and I arranged to go down to the farm on the following day.

"Perhaps I shall see your father then," I said.

"Oh, I don't know," she said hurriedly. "He may be there. . . . I really don't know."

"Look here, Martha," I said to her. "Why is it you never let me see your father?"

She flushed.

"You can meet him if you like. Only I——" she hesitated. "Well, I may as well tell you straight out that he doesn't care for the Mounted Police very much. He'd be furious if he knew I'd been seeing a lot of you. It's a funny kink he's got."

But her voice was trembling as she made the explanation, and I was very much afraid that our suspicions of Baker were going to turn out to be well-founded.

I saw Baker the next day, and he was quite civil to me, though rather gruff. I consoled myself with the fact that Martha probably knew nothing of what was going on (if anything *was* going on). There was nothing for it but to make a search of the place and three days later under cover of darkness we went along there and made a thorough search of all the outbuildings, cowsheds, stables, etc.

For a long time we found nothing suspicious and my pal became more and more disgruntled, and

I began to feel a lightening of my heart. Perhaps after all our suspicions were entirely groundless!

We finished up in the loft of the seed-barn, and feeling a little tired we sat in the seed-bin, burrowing in the seed with our hands not with any real hope of finding anything, but more in the idle way one runs one's hand through sand on the seashore.

Suddenly my hand touched something hard. I burrowed deeper until I could get a firm grip of the object, whatever it was. Then I yanked it out and found it was a big square bottle of whisky. It even had a Johnny Walker label on it!

My heart sank when I realised what this meant, but I had to go through with it. After this discovery we set to with renewed energy to search the place, and this time we found, hidden away under a huge pile of hay above the horse stable, a full-sized still.

We kept the bottle of whisky as evidence, and then and there (it was about midnight) we went up to the farmhouse and banged on the door, demanding to see Mr. Baker.

The door was opened by Baker himself. He had a gun in his hand, and we only just had time to fling ourselves to one side when he fired. Then before he had time to fire again we sprang on him, knocked the gun out of his hand and handcuffed him. At that moment Martha came running down-stairs holding a candle.

"Oh, what's the matter? Is anyone hurt?" she cried.

I went across to her.

"You go along upstairs again, Martha," I said to her quietly. "There's nothing the matter, nothing to worry about."

"Don't lie to me," she almost screamed, brushing me aside. "What are you doing to my father?"

She ran across to him where he sagged limply against the wall with his handcuffed hands hanging helplessly in front of him.

"Oh, father, what is it?"

Then she noticed the bottle of whisky which my pal still held in his hand.

"Oh, that's what it is, is it?" she said slowly.

"Yes, my dear, these constables have come to arrest me," he replied gently. "You mustn't worry about me. I shall be all right."

Martha turned to me appealingly.

"Don't take him away," she implored. "Don't take him. You can't know what this means to us."

She covered her face with her hands.

I told her that I had to do my duty.

"I'm sorry, Martha, for your sake, but I've got to do it."

Her pleading turned to anger.

"You cad!" she stormed. "All these months you've been pretending that you were my friend, and now it's you, you of all people, who are responsible for bringing this tragedy on us."

"Martha," the old man broke in, "it's not a bit of use going on like this. I told you to have nothing to do with any constables, and you refused to listen

to me. Now perhaps you will admit that I was right."

The girl broke into a storm of weeping. It was so unlike her usual self, for she was always so self-assured and sensible and not in the least inclined to become hysterical, that I could hardly believe she was the same person.

I went over and tried to comfort her, but she pushed me violently away.

"I never want to see you again!" she sobbed.

We took our prisoner back to the camp, and eventually he was tried and found guilty. I forget what his sentence was, but I don't think it was a light one.

I never saw Martha again.

Poor girl! I'm afraid it nearly broke her heart to see her father arrested, and the fact that I was partially responsible for his arrest-made it a bitter pill indeed.

It was just another case of duty coming first, but it was a long time before I could forget Martha's pleading voice as she begged me to release her father; and I wondered often if I had done right.

I remember telling this tale to a group of men up at Fort Simpson a year or two later. There was one old-stager up there, a grand old man who'd been in the Force for longer than anyone could remember, who loved telling yarns himself but always went to sleep when anyone else told them.

He woke up just as we were discussing if I did right in running-in old Baker. There was one

young constable there who insisted that if he'd been in my position he'd have behaved, as he said, "like a gentleman" and let the old man off. It would have been easy to wangle, he said, for I could have come along and searched the place by myself, and when I found the still I could either have kept mum about it altogether, or—and this, he said, is what *he'd* have done—could have warned the Bakers of my discovery, and told them I'd do nothing about it if they gave up the business.

At this point the grizzly old-stager woke up and demanded to know what the argument was about. Someone started to explain to him.

"Oh, I don't want to hear all that nonsense," he said. "I don't know what this job of young Dyker's was and I don't want to know. But you seem to be arguing as to whether he did right or not, isn't that it?"

"Sure," we replied.

When the Old Man passed a verdict it was never questioned, and we waited silently to hear what he'd have to say.

"Did you get your man?" he asked abruptly, fixing me with a steely grey eye.

I didn't grasp what he was getting at at first and stared blankly at him.

"In this job you've been talking about," he explained impatiently. "Did you get your man at the end of it?"

"Oh, yes. I got my man."

"Well, what d'you think you're in the Mounted

for if it isn't to get your man? I don't know what you're all arguing about."

And he settled down and went to sleep again.

We changed the subject of conversation after that. But, although the Old Man didn't know in the least what we were talking about, I think his die-hard attitude was the best, and that his answer was the right one.

CHAPTER X

RESCUED FROM ICY DEATH

I

ABOUT this time I found myself in the same detachment as a French Count. I don't know what he was doing in the North-West Mounted but I suppose he had run wild as a young man—he still had a pretty wild streak in him—and been disowned by his family. That was the story that went round anyway. Whether it was true or not I never troubled to find out.

I liked him. He was a gay, light-hearted fellow to have as a companion, and though obviously cultured he never put on any airs and always seemed to be thoroughly enjoying whatever job he had to undertake. I didn't see much of him, but in the few months we were in the same detachment I got to know him pretty well, and we did one or two jobs together.

He was tougher than he looked, for he had a slim, almost dapper figure, but he nearly always came off well in a fight, and the muscles he hid under his tunic must have been a very decent size. At the same time he had a kind of half-humorous chivalrous manner about him, especially when dealing with women, who incidentally always found him very attractive.

He once told me of the girl he had been engaged to. Something had gone wrong—he didn't tell me what—and maybe it was that that had made him run wild. Anyway I never saw him flirt with a girl, though he appeared to like their company.

We didn't have any very exciting experiences together, but there's one incident I remember that may be worth recording. It illustrates the sort of man the Count was better than any description I can give him.

We were patrolling a district together, and when we were going through a small town we passed a dance-hall.

"Let's go in there for a bit," the Count suggested.

I looked at him a bit dubiously. He was apt to do curious things sometimes when out on patrol, and there really didn't seem to be any earthly reason for going into the hall.

"We're just as likely to find trouble in there as we are outside," he continued. "In fact very much more likely. That place harbours a lot of bad hats. I know it."

There weren't many dance-halls the Count didn't know.

Well, we went in, and the very first person we saw was "Slick" Rogers, a miner, and a well-known trouble-maker. The Count and "Slick" had had one or two little feuds before, and I believe the Count had got him a few months' imprisonment for something. Anyway, there was no love lost between them.

"I guessed Slick or one of that lot would be here," the Count said quietly.

Then he went over to Slick and challenged him to a game of cards. I took a quick glance round the place to see if I could spot any other characters well-known to the police, but I couldn't see any. So I settled down to watch the Count "skin" Slick.

And of course the Count did skin him. I never saw him lose a game of cards whatever it was, from poker to pontoon. He had amazing luck and considerable skill as well. As for Slick that night he didn't seem to have either, and "palming" wasn't one of his accomplishments, so that he got up finally in an extremely bad temper.

There was a very pretty dancing-girl whom I had noticed for some time with her eye on the Count, and I guessed she'd fallen for his attractions. She was a slim, dainty little thing, very dark, with soft brown eyes. I was rather afraid the Count would fall for her and waste away the rest of the evening, and I was anxious to be off. I reckon I didn't know him so well at that time.

I went up to him.

"Coming away now?"

"Aw, let's wait a bit."

He yawned and leant back in his chair. He let his eyes rest gently on the dancing-girl who was regarding him from the opposite corner of the room. Then he got up, strolled across to her and bowed with exaggerated deference.

"I think, M'amselle, it must be you who brought me such good fortune at the cards to-night. Would you honour me by taking a little refreshment with me?"

I saw Slick scowling behind him, and realised in a flash that the miner was in love with the girl. If the Count wasn't careful there'd be the devil of a clash in a minute. If ever there was hate in a man's eyes it was in Slick's at that moment.

The Count and the girl had a drink together and then they began to dance. The Count danced beautifully, and though I was rather annoyed at the way he was behaving I had to admit to myself that they made an ideal couple on the floor.

Slick suddenly rushed across to them and tried to take the girl away, whereupon she smacked his face good and hard.

He laughed, a high-pitched, rather hysterical laugh, and continued to pester them, until the Count shouted at him angrily to clear off. This infuriated him; he tore the girl from the Count's grasp, and then started taking off his coat saying he'd fight him for her.

The Count took his tunic off with a laugh and handed it to me.

"I won't be long, Bob," he said, "I've just got to teach this fellow a lesson."

They fought. The other dancers crowded up to watch and the girl came across to me, her eyes shining.

"Oh, I do hope he beats Slick," she exclaimed. "Vile creature!"

I doubt if the Count ever had a harder fight, but he won in the end. The miner fell to the ground and lay there swearing and spitting out teeth. The Count put on his tunic without a word, and went across to get another drink for himself.

The girl, when she realised the Count had won the fight rushed across to him and tried to kiss him, but he undid her arms and said very gently:

"Only my mother and my sister do that." Then, raising his glass:

"Your very good health, M'amselle!"

The only other experience of any note that the Count and I had together was that of chasing a couple of murderers down Peace River. Unfortunately, from the point of view of the storyteller, this was not nearly as exciting as it sounds.

It was a long arduous business, but when we eventually got them they proved as meek as lambs, chiefly I think on account of fatigue, for we'd been hot on their trail for several weeks. Their canoe had upset in some rapids and they'd lost all provisions including their guns. After that it was merely a question of time before we got them.

There was one little excitement when the Count, leaping up excitedly when he first caught sight of them, overbalanced and fell into the icy water. But fortunately I was soon able to fish him out and he was none the worse for his unexpected bath! All the same it must have been mighty unpleasant for him. The waters of those Western rivers, especially

in winter, are just about as icy as you can possibly imagine. And I don't believe even the most vivid imagination could conjure up the full' horror of falling into one of those rivers in mid-winter *and being held under by the ice!* That was what happened to me during the winter of 1912 up Mackenzie River way. It was a ghastly experience, and I only escaped with my life by a miracle.

II

It happened on a tributary of the Mackenzie. I was stationed at Fort Simpson at the time, and from there I'd gone out with a sergeant to one of the first really lonely posts I'd been to. I had to get a man who had been in our hands on more than one occasion for horse-rustling and other little escapades. He wasn't one of the toughs who would draw a gun on sight, but one of those poor devils who simply cannot keep out of mischief, but go on from one crime to another, because it just isn't in their blood to go straight.

In the early stages of the chase I didn't know it was this fellow, but it was mighty lucky for me it *was* he, and not one of the ugly customers I sometimes had to deal with, otherwise I wouldn't be writing these reminiscences!

One evening I was sitting in the post with the sergeant at the end of a hard but uneventful day. We had both done our respective patrols, had our reports signed by the ranchers *en route*, and everything had seemed very quiet. "No Complaints" had been

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the order of the day, and we had settled down to an easy evening.

Suddenly we heard a commotion outside and the next moment the door of our shack was flung open and a man staggered in, beating the snow off his fur-coat and wiping the frozen snow from his eyes.


"Who are you? What do you want?" the sergeant rapped out.

But the man made no reply. He leant against the wooden door, and I could see that he was dead beat. I leapt out of my chair (we only boasted two!) and pushed it across to him, and he flopped into it then and there over by the door. Then I went and got him some steaming hot coffee into which I put a stiff noggin of something a little stronger, and in a few minutes he was able to tell us his trouble.

He came from a village over forty miles away, and he'd been travelling hard, he said, the whole way here. The last ten miles he'd come through a blinding snowstorm.

"Well, what's wrong?" asked the sergeant.

"Briefly, it's this," he replied, "a wrong 'un' got into our village, and just as I was sitting down to have a bit of a meal, he banged on the door of my shack, and started whining some tale about losing all his belongings or something of the sort. I didn't listen to the guy very carefully. 'I don't want to hear all this,' I said to him, 'but you're hungry, aren't you? That's what's wrong?' 'Sure,' he said, 'I'm hungry, mate. If you could spare——'



"Well, I didn't stop to listen to him any longer. 'Wait here,' I said to him, 'and I'll go and fetch you something.' I felt kind of sorry for the fellow. I left him in the front room of my shack.

"When I came back I saw him stuffing all my catables into a bag. I ran towards him angrily, but he whipped out a gun and told me to stick 'em up. I hadn't any alternative. I hadn't got my gun on me, and the man looked desperate.

"'You've got some gold somewhere, I know,' he said. 'If you don't tell me where it is I'll plug you through the head.' Perhaps it was cowardly, but I showed him where my dust was. He took the lot. Then he was away in a flash. It was no use going after him. I didn't attempt to. But no sooner had I got down into the village than I came across another fellow in a frenzy. He'd been robbed, he said. All his dust had been taken while he was away from his shack. There's no doubt it must have been the same man.

"Well, I said I'd come out here for you, and if I hadn't run into that snowstorm I'd have been here an hour sooner. I'll come back with you as soon as you like and help to get that man."

"Hm!" the sergeant grunted—and I could see from his attitude that he thought the man had been a fool to allow himself to be robbed in such a way—"I guess it's no use starting to-night. You better have a good rest and we'll make an early start in the morning."

The next morning we set out and eventually

arrived at the village where the hold-up had taken place. The blizzard had wiped out all traces of the man's tracks but from various informants we found out the direction he had taken. We had a look at the shack where the hold-up had taken place but there was no sign of a bullet-mark anywhere, and we reckoned the villager had been exaggerating.

This village, by the way, was on a Mackenzie tributary, and it sounded as though the man had been making for a village further down the river. It was midwinter, the weather was bitterly cold, and most of the river was frozen over.

We had a good team of dogs and we reckoned we'd have a pretty good chance of catching him unless he gave us the slip by lying low in one of the villages. Once we knew the general direction in which he'd gone there was only one possible trail for him to have taken and we followed it up.

It would have been very rash at that time of the year to branch off the main trails as there was every chance of being lost in a blizzard, or if disaster of any sort befell you there was no chance of anyone discovering you. In fact, it was a pretty big risk not to stick to the main trails, and we didn't think it was a risk our man would care to take.

We'd refused the offer of the robbed villager to accompany us. The sergeant, for some reason, had taken a dislike to him, and anyway he'd have been more nuisance than he was worth.

The dogs were going splendidly, and we rattled

along at a good pace, taking turns at managing them. There had been no blizzard for some hours now, and the snow was beginning to get good and hard on the surface.

We'd been going for several hours when we came across a trader coming from the opposite direction. We asked him if he'd seen anything of our man.

"Well," he said, "I reckon I did meet a man, but I don't think he can be the one you're looking for."

"What did he look like?"

The trader described him.

"That's him!" exclaimed the sergeant triumphantly.

"Did he try to stick you up?"

"Lord, no!" said the trader, surprised. "He asked me if I could spare him a little tobacco. I gave him some and then he wanted to ladle me out some dust in payment. I wouldn't let him. The tobacco I gave him wasn't worth much, and I'm always willing to oblige a man. I know what it's like to be without a smoke miles from anywhere or anybody in this barren country." He smiled. "Well, I'll be pushing on."

"Wait a minute!" the sergeant cried. "This man—which way was he going? How long ago did you meet him?"

"Oh, it must have been about two hours ago. He told me he was going to cut across the wastes to try and hit the stream higher up."

This was very valuable information for we might easily have missed the side-track if we hadn't had

the tip, as it was scarcely visible when we got to it. It began in the most unexpected place, branching sharply out to the left, telling us that our man had left the safety of the main trail for a lonely and hazardous journey through the wastes.

I suppose it must be difficult for a man who's not been out in the West to realise the vastness, the stillness, the glaring whiteness of those snow-bound wastes. That terrible monotonous whiteness has sent many men stark staring mad, and in the next chapter I shall have something to say about my experiences with a few of the unfortunate madmen with whom I came into contact. It meant that that man had a lot of pluck to plunge into the wastes on his own, and we admired him for it.

For four more hours we journeyed on without seeing a sign of life.

"What's that?" the sergeant exclaimed suddenly.

I shaded my eyes and saw a small black dot in the distance. As we drew nearer the black dot took shape and revealed itself as a hut of logs and mud from the top of which curled a lazy coil of smoke—a welcome sight.

We decided it would be much better if one of us took the sleigh round the back of the hut while the other went along to the front and cornered the man if he was inside. If we drove the sleigh right up to the place he'd hear us coming and perhaps, if he was desperate, plug us with his gun.

I told the sergeant I'd like to do the job, so I left him with the sleigh and made my way very quietly

to the front of the hut. I was almost there when I suddenly stopped dead still and listened in astonishment.

A very fine tenor voice was singing an old ballad. The beauty and the strangeness of it in the middle of those lonely wastes quite took my breath away, and it was a moment or two before I moved.

As I approached the doorway a delicious smell of moose-meat cooking came to my nostrils.

I opened the door and with a cheery nod said to the man who was bending over the fire:

"That smells good, pard. I hope you're cooking enough for three."

He looked up slowly without a trace of surprise on his face. As he did so I unbuttoned my fur coat, revealing my red tunic—and gun.

"It's just as well you've come," he said. "I guess I was getting a bit tired of my own company." Then, with a beautiful show of resignation: "Say, Mountie, how the *Hell* did you find me here?"

At that moment the sergeant came in and took in the situation at a glance.

He grinned.

"Oh, you've got him, have you, Bob?"

I nodded.

"Know who it is? It's old Ransome, the rascal. I reckon we've met before over a horse-rustling case, ain't that so, Ransome?"

Ransome took the meat off the fire, and grinned.

"I didn't know I was so famous," he said with

heavy sarcasm. "Well, what about eating? We've got a long way to go."

"I want your gun first," I said. It was no good running any risks with the man. He was known to be pretty cute, and he was never defeated till safely in gaol.

"I haven't got a gun," he replied, and seeing my incredulous look, added: "Search me. Search the place. I tell you I haven't got one."

"What did you stick up that villager with then?" He howled with laughter.

"What a fool that man was!"

"I said, what did you stick him up with," I repeated sternly.

"Two fingers," he laughed, "in the corner of my coat pocket. Never saw a guy so scared in all my life."

I was still suspicious, however, and searched the place, but without finding a gun. We had a meal and I watched Ransome closely the whole time in case of emergency, but he never looked like giving any trouble.

The sergeant decided he'd better take Ransome's sled back the way we'd come, call at the village and collect the men to give evidence against Ransome, while I took the man back the shortest way to Fort Simpson.

I'd decided to go back with the sergeant as far as the main trail, follow the main trail to the river, and then follow the river as far as possible to Mackenzie River, and so to the Fort. Ransome,

however, said it was foolish to lose about four or five hours going all the way back to the main trail. We were only a mile or two from the river now, he said. In fact it had been the river he'd been making for.

Well, this seemed true enough, for we'd had that information from the trader, but I hesitated to act on Ransome's advice lest he was up to some trick. He saw me hesitating and held out his hand.

"See here, Mountie," he said, "I'm playing fair, I swear I am. We'll shake on it. I don't want five hours extra mushing for nothing, and no more do you. I won't try to make a get-a-way. I know when I'm beaten."

I took his word for it and shook his outstretched hand.

We parted from the sergeant and started on our way. I only had a very general idea of the lie of the land, but I was pretty sure Ransome was telling the truth. I wanted to get him in as soon as possible, and as I was armed and he wasn't, there didn't seem much chance of him making a get-a-way. But I thought it would be as well to rub it in that I didn't mean to stand any nonsense from him.

"I mean to get you in," I said to him, "Whether you're alive or dead!"

"Guess that's the straight griffen," he grinned, "but I reckon a corpse ain't every jolly company, so I'll save you the trouble of plugging me. You can stand on me, pard."

A bit of a thaw was setting in now, following the blizzard, and it was Ransome who pointed out the importance of pressing our dogs to the utmost.

"See here, cully, we've got to beat it hard to get down to that river before she starts to break up. She'll be full of goldarned airholes as it is."

We pushed on for all we were worth, whooping our dogs on, and every now and then giving them a taste of the lash. After a hard rush we got to the bank and I knew that my confidence in Ransome was not misplaced. We started off at the double down the ice on the river.

The sleigh skimmed the ice, and we went like the wind. The exhilaration of flying over smooth ice after the rather heavy going of the snow had the effect of a glass of champagne. I felt that all was right with the world, and Ransome certainly didn't behave in the least like a man under arrest. He and I talked animatedly as the sleigh sped onward.

Now and again towards the centre of the river, where the water flowed more quickly underneath, the ice was thin. Sometimes it sank beneath our weight and we had to splash through six inches of water. But this was nothing to worry about. I'd often travelled on doubtful ice before. But as we got further down the river conditions became worse.

More and more frequently we came upon nasty little holes where the ice had broken with the force of water underneath, and little spouts of water burst through like fountains. To a disinterested onlooker this thawing river would have presented

a most beautiful and wonderful sight, but all our energies were devoted to urging on the dogs and guiding the sleigh over the treacherous ice. We had no time, no inclination, to feast our eyes on the beauty of the scene.

After a specially ticklish patch which we got through successfully, Ransome turned towards me and grinned.

"Mountie," he said, "I guess you're sorry we ever met."

"Not on your life!" I replied. "I'm going to get you in alive."

Under the stress of the moment I felt his remark was a threatening one. It certainly appeared to me then that he'd brought me down this river with a purpose in view. But I'm sure now I was mistaken, and I'm sorry I misjudged him.

My nerves were getting bad. The strain of the ride was telling on me, and Ransome had a haggard look about the eyes. I began to wonder if either of us would get back alive.

CRACK! CRACK!! CRACK!!! The loud reports echoed across the still river, and for a second made my heart stand still. Instinctively my hand jerked to my gun. But Ransome's heavy hand clapped my shoulder.

"I was startled myself at first," he said, "and I reckon I've had more experience of these rivers than you, Mountie. It's only the ice cracking up. Makes a pretty din, don't it?"

I was annoyed at showing my nervousness and said

nothing. The ice was cracking all around us now, and sounded like hundreds of gunshots, as if we were hemmed in by a malicious and invisible enemy.

"We'll have to make for the bank," I said at length. "We'll be going in if we're not careful."

"Yes, I reckon you're right, Mountie. We can't go much further like this."

"Har!" I yelled to the dogs. "Ha . . . aa . . . ar!"

They swerved to the left, the sleigh grinding the ice as we violently changed our course. The river was very broad at this point and we must have been pretty near to the Mackenzie.

Suddenly a peal of laughter echoed over the stillness. Ransome was laughing.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" I said irritably.

"Oh, I don't know, Mountie. Reckon I'm getting light-headed."

My suspicions of him flared up again and I decided it would be wiser if he went ahead of me, so that I could see what he was doing. I gave him control of the sleigh and followed behind closely.

Our speed had slackened to a snail's pace now. We were splashing through a few inches of water the whole time. Ransome flogged the dogs with the raw hide. As we approached the bank I could see it would be touch and go whether we made it or not. Instead of getting firmer near the bank the ice seemed to be still thinner.

"If we go through," I yelled to Ransome, "try and cut the dogs loose to give them a chance."

"Sure." His mouth was set in a hard grim line as he glanced round at me.

The sleigh had almost reached the bank, and I couldn't have been more than fifteen yards away when the ice gave way beneath me with startling suddenness and I plunged into the ice-cold water.

I yelled as I felt myself falling to attract Ransome's attention, but even as I plunged in I realised I couldn't expect much help from him. Here was an ideal chance for him to make a get-a-way.

The water closed over my head. . . . I gasped . . . the icy shock numbed me. . . . Only one thing I realised . . . *the stream was flowing under the ice and would carry me away from the hole!*

I got panicky . . . I fought fiercely to get to the top . . . tried to keep my mouth shut . . . hold my breath . . . open my eyes and see light . . . but I couldn't . . . they were blinded by the cold.

My head came up against the ice with a bump. I'd only been under two or three seconds. It seemed a lifetime.

I knew I'd been carried past my hole. I clawed at the ice above me and sank away from it. I touched it again . . . and sank. I tried to scream without opening my mouth. I felt that I was screaming but no sound came. That silent scream was my last conscious thought. After that the swirling iciness became a black soundless pit. . . .

Something was trickling down my throat. It irritated me. I wished it would stop trickling. I

coughed. . . . I spluttered. . . . I opened my eyes.

I saw Ransome's face very close to mine. He was bending over me, holding something to my lips. I pushed it aside and glanced around me. A fire was blazing merrily just beside me and my soaking togs were drying in front of it. I was wearing Ransome's fur coat.

When I felt strong enough to talk to him I asked him how he'd got me out, but he'd say very little about it.

"I heard you yell," he said, "and turned round to see you disappearing. I rushed to the spot but saw no sign of you and guessed you'd been carried down underneath. I broke the ice a bit further on, and by a stroke of luck you came up just to the edge of the hole where the ice was thin. You bumped your head on the ice, but I couldn't quite get hold of you. I nearly fell in myself. I broke the ice a yard or two ahead and this time grabbed you before you were carried any further. I hoiked you out, and I've never seen a live man look so dead as you did, Mountie."

He grinned.

"I dosed you with your emergency rum. That did the trick."

I gripped his hand.

"Thanks," I said simply. There seemed to be nothing else I could say to this man who had saved my life at great risk of his own. I flushed as I thought of the mean suspicions I had had of him; but a

Mounted man is naturally suspicious. He's got to be.

Well, I got Ransome back, and I told the full story. The two villagers had their gold-dust returned to them and their eatables replaced, and were satisfied.

But somehow or other the thief never received his sentence. For the thief, at great personal peril, had saved the life of a Mountie who was bringing him back to justice.

We of the Police always admired a man, and Ransome sure was that.

CHAPTER XI

MADNESS AND MURDER

I

INSANITY is a terrible thing even in civilised, well-populated parts of the world where the insane can be put away in asylums and looked after properly. But when it occurs in the vast loneliness of the North-West it is far more terrible.

A man can be mad for months without anyone knowing about it, and then suddenly, with such swiftness that the stroke has fallen even before the danger is realised, he runs riot, kills relentlessly, desperately, regardless of what or whom he is killing, and is finally captured and taken away by Mounted men, a gibbering lunatic.

I don't want you to think I am letting my imagination run away with me. This actually is what has happened over and over again in the lonely regions of the West. I have had to deal with a number of madmen myself, and I can tell you those few jobs put a good many years on my life. They were by far the most nerve-racking I undertook, and, as you can imagine, they were pretty dangerous too.

Perhaps the strangest case of all, though possibly not the most gruesome, was that of the religious maniac I had to go out and capture.

Reports reached headquarters that a man up in a lonely village had been running around threatening people with an axe and calling down the vengeance of Heaven upon them. They were afraid something terrible would be happening unless he were captured.

I had about a day's journey to do in order to get to where the report had come from, and then I discovered I still had another fifty miles to cover before I could get my man. Apparently he wasn't a villager at all, but had a grant of land in a very lonely district. This was the nearest village—fifty miles away.

There was a time, I was told, when he would come into the village at regular intervals for a chat and a smoke and take back supplies with him, but during the last year he had hardly appeared at all. But he had appeared a few days ago. This time he had rushed wildly round with an axe, shrieking about the sins of the people. The terrified villagers had kept to their shacks, and at last he had gone away again brandishing his axe on high and saying he was the saviour of the world.

I rested that night at the village and got on the trail early next morning. Late in the evening I reached the shack.

I left the sleigh a little way off and approached the place cautiously. The man might be desperate and I didn't want to be taken unawares. It was snowing fairly hard, though the journey had been an easy one and I'd had good weather up till now. There was a bit of a wind getting up, and the sky

was black. It looked to me as if we were in for a blizzard.

The door of the shack was open, and I at once concluded that he couldn't be there, but I still went cautiously remembering that the poor fellow was demented. I had my gun ready for any emergency. But the sight that met my eyes was altogether unexpected.

The man was on his knees, praying aloud.

I was perplexed. I didn't know what to do. He hadn't heard me approach, apparently, for he never moved but continued with his prayers. He looked as if he might have been in that position for hours and as if he might stay there for hours. His hands were clasped in pious devotion. His snowy white head rested upon them. He was dressed practically in rags. To complete the picture he had a long white straggling beard. He looked like one of the prophets.

I stood at the door motionless and looked about me. The shack was in the most indescribable state of filth. He had obviously made no attempt to tidy it or clean it for months. It literally smelt unclean.

I wouldn't like to spend long in here, I thought to myself, and little dreamed just how long I would have to stay. It had begun to snow really hard now and I was just about to step inside when the old man suddenly sprang to his feet and, without saying a word or even seeming to look at me, leapt at me, knocked the gun out of my hand and held my wrists in a vice-like grip.

It all happened in a flash and I was taken completely unawares. Even now I could hardly believe that the man had moved at all. This sudden change from complete inactivity to startling action was so unexpected that for a moment I stared in bewilderment first at the patch of floor where he had been kneeling and then at the wild bearded face thrust so evilly to mine.

I have never seen such eyes. I never want to see such eyes again. They had a wild inhuman look that was past imagining. It is far beyond the power of my pen to describe those eyes to you. They were dreadful to look upon, yet they held one in a strange unexplainable way that defies description.

When I have forgotten all the rest of my adventures in the North-West I shall remember the eyes of that madman. They were red-rimmed. They were cold and grey. They held no life, yet they held a kind of steely power. I stared at them fascinated and only moved with a terrific effort when he took his skinny hands from my wrists and raised them slowly in the direction of my throat.

Then I closed with him and we swayed to and fro in a fierce clinch. He broke away and then sprang on me with renewed energy. He looked thin, bony, emaciated, yet he had the strength of half-a-dozen men of his size. If he had been of normal weight and height I should have been overpowered at once, but he was small and wizened. His strength was the unaccountable strength that is given sometimes to madmen, the strength some say of the devil. It

was a wiry strength, and indeed his whole body seemed to be made of taut wire. He was the most difficult man to overpower that I have ever encountered.

I never went in for wrestling much. Boxing was more my line. But I did know a thing or two about the game, and I reckon I knew more than this crazy creature I was struggling with. Yet, by all that was wonderful, I could *not* get that man down. I grew more and more tired (remember, I had had a long journey just before), and even as I grew tired so the madman seemed to grow in strength. He never said a word, but just struggled grimly with a fierce fanatical determination.

I trod on my gun, and this reminded me that there was a chance of ending the tussle abruptly if I could manage myself into such a position that I could get hold of it. But the madman seemed to read my thoughts with a devilish skill. Or perhaps he saw me glance down at the weapon. Anyway, whatever the reason he waited his opportunity and then took a flying kick at the weapon and sent it spinning out into the snow.

That chance was gone.

With a tremendous effort I managed to fling the man away from me and he staggered back against the wooden wall of the shack, breathing heavily, with hands stretched out in a claw-like attitude, a look of fiendish hate on his face and that same horrible look of madness in those cold grey eyes.

I sprang to the open doorway through which the snow was beating heavily, in an effort to get to my

gun. But he was too quick for me. Another spring and he was on top of me, his eyes long slits of hate, his hair flying wildly in the wind which beat through the doorway in strong icy gusts. The force of the impact sent me staggering against the door which closed with a bang. There was now no hope of getting my gun. It was a question of struggling until one of us was overpowered—perhaps a struggle to the death. I had a horrible sickly feeling inside me that the madman was going to triumph. I set my teeth and steeled myself for another of his wild attacks. . . .

I suppose we must have wrestled thus for about an hour. Then quite suddenly I saw the opportunity to get a lock on him. I had been manoeuvring for it for some time without success, but he was weakening and gave me the opening. I seized the opportunity with both hands realising that it might very well be my last hope of getting out of that shack alive. I got the lock on him and held him.

Beads of sweat stood out on his brow, but he was impotent. He couldn't move. He lay there helpless. Tears of self-pity and rage streamed down his face. He looked like a very old worn-out man. In actual fact he was still in his thirties. I found this out afterwards when I was collecting some more facts about him from the villagers. His hair, they said, had only gone white during the last year.

I got the handcuffs on him, and for the first time for well over an hour felt secure again. But the man still struggled, and I was forced to bind his ankles

with some strong cord, and lay him down gently in a corner where he wept quietly to himself.

I opened the door to get my gun and was astonished when the snow came flying in, blown by a furious gale. There was a very nasty blizzard getting up. I had heard the wind moaning and howling outside for some time but had not paid much attention to it. I'd certainly had no idea that such a storm was brewing.

I struggled out into the snow, picked up my gun and looked around me. But I couldn't see far. In every direction I could only see about fifty yards and the blizzard appeared to be gaining in strength every minute.

My one thought was for my dogs and I rushed out to where I'd left my sleigh. Already a number of them had started digging pits in the snow to lie in until the blizzard had passed. And when they do that it means the blizzard's going to be pretty bad. I got them up and drove them to a shed at the back where I fed them (fortunately I'd brought a good supply of food both for the dogs and for myself, though I hadn't expected to have to stay the night). They were ravenous and so was I. One pound each of dried fish and canned horse-flesh was the usual meal given to huskies—always at night when the day's work was over. It was fatal to give them any food in the morning, we found, for they tended to become sluggish, and if all your dogs are sluggish you're lucky if you get anywhere. And if one or two dogs are sluggish and are not pulling their

weight it is quite a common sight to see the others set upon the lazy ones, and often the devil of a fight ensues, the traces get hopelessly tangled, and you're delayed for hours sorting them out again. And as time was an all-important factor in police work you can understand why we took good care always to keep our dogs up to the mark.

I left the dogs in the shed and struggled back again to the shack. The blizzard had definitely grown worse. I could hardly see a yard in front of me. But though it was extremely unpleasant outside I didn't much relish the prospect of entering that evil-smelling dirty shack again, and the idea of spending a night with a madman was still less pleasant. However, there wasn't any alternative. I got back to the shack, entered, and closed the door behind me.

The madman had turned his face to the wall and was praying. I went over to him and tried to get him to eat something, but he refused.

The stench in that shack was terrible.

I set to and cleaned up the place as best I could and in the end got it fairly respectable, or if not respectable at least habitable, which you couldn't have called it before. It wasn't till then that I sat down and ate some food. And all the time, in a monotonous droning voice the madman said his prayers, and voiced his hatred of mankind.

It got on my nerves. The blizzard was flinging itself in fury against the rickety old shack and I wondered if it would survive. It creaked and groaned.

The wind moaned and whined outside, and through the tiny window I could see nothing but a blinding wall of snow.

— I don't think I have ever been in such a nervous state before or since. I was dead tired, yet I couldn't sit still, much less sleep. The madman's voice drove me to a frenzy.

"For God's sake, shut up," I yelled at him.

But still he prayed, and prayed, and prayed.

I controlled myself. It was no good letting my nerves get the better of me. I sat down. Finally I lay down and tried to snooze. But the moment I lay down the madman's voice ceased abruptly, and I had to sit up with a jerk to see what he was doing. Of course he wasn't doing anything. He hadn't moved.

But I knew now that sleep was quite impossible. I should always be afraid of that madman writhing across the floor towards me and, though bound hand and foot, somehow managing to strangle me. Fantastic notion! But I was overwrought. My imagination was running riot. The howling of the blizzard was driving me to a frenzy. Oh, why wouldn't the infernal blizzard stop? Why wouldn't the madman start his praying again? This silence was worse than his monotonous mumbling.

I got up and walked about. I couldn't keep still. . . .

Suddenly the madman rolled over and faced me, his wild eyes blazing.

"Oh, you sinner!" he roared. "May the Lord wreak vengeance on you!"


He spat violently, venomously in my direction.

I took no notice of him but continued my walking up and down. This seemed to enrage him. He set up a kind of chant, a jumble of Biblical phrases gone wrong.

"Why do the righteous perish," he yelled. "When the sinful man strutteth upon the mountains?"

The craziest sentences flowed from his lips in an unceasing stream. I was in a crazy mood myself. When he was silent I thought that anything would be better than silence, but when he yelled and ranted and prayed I thought that nothing in the world could be sweeter than silence. In the end I could bear his ranting no longer, and I stuffed a piece of rag in his mouth. I had been reluctant to do anything like that to the man before because I felt a kind of pity for him and didn't want to give him more discomfort than was absolutely necessary. But now I was past pity. I was almost in a frenzy myself. It was all I could do to prevent myself from stifling that man for good and all.

I understood now, or rather after this experience when I had time to think it over, the reason why men went out of their senses when they lived quite alone about ten hours by sleigh from the nearest human habitation. Of course spending the night in company with a madman made matters worse for me, but I could well understand how this poor fellow had gone mad.



I prowled around the shack. It looked as if it had been inhabited by a wild animal. The only visible sign that a human being lived there was a large Bible lying on top of a lot of dirty boxes. From the much thumb-marked and soiled condition of its pages I gathered that it had been well read. That was the only book he had in the place. It was easy to see how he had taken to religion and how it had touched his brain. All alone, seeing no one for months on end, he had concentrated all the energies of his brain on his Bible. The result was inevitable. I began to pity him again. But I didn't take the gag out.

When dawn broke the blizzard still showed no signs of abating. I had managed to force the madman to eat some food, but only after great difficulty. The trouble was that the moment I took his gag out he began his dreadful ranting again. However, he swallowed a little; I stuffed the rag back, and ate something myself. Then I struggled round to have a look at the dogs. The blizzard looked as if it was going on for days. The thought of another night alone with that madman made me shudder, but it would be certain death to face this blizzard, and I could do nothing but wait . . . and hope. . . .

Towards the middle of the day the blizzard dropped as suddenly as it had sprung up. The moaning of the wind ceased. A faint moaning from the madman was the only sound that filled the shack. If I started now, I calculated, there

wasn't a hope of getting back before night. The going would be terribly slow; but anything would be better than another night in the shack. I went round and got out the dogs and the sleigh.

Then I picked up the madman to carry him out, but when I reached the doorway he contorted his face into such frightful shapes and his eyes rolled so violently that I became alarmed and thought he was having a fit. I took out his gag, whereupon he shrieked out for his Bible which he had evidently forgotten all about before, but which he now caught sight of lying on the boxes. I gave him this and he became contented.

Then I strapped him on the sleigh and began my hard monotonous journey back to headquarters.

"Mush!"

The dogs surged forward but could hardly make any ground at all in the soft snow. However, they struggled along gamely and after a time began to get a better footing as the snow froze. We gained speed though we were still moving desperately slowly.

We got there early next morning, and I can tell you I was completely exhausted. I hadn't had a wink of sleep from the moment I'd set out to get this man. I'd mushed about a hundred and forty miles in all and I'd had a terrific struggle with a madman. I was not only physically exhausted but mentally as well, for the strain had been colossal.

Those few days were pretty tough. I didn't realise how tired I was until I got my man in. Then I slept without a break for fifteen hours.

II

I haven't told you much about my pals in the Mounted in the years I spent further North for the simple reason that I was moving about so much that I didn't get to know many of them very well. There were lots of good fellows up in those Northern parts, but except possibly for poor old Tommy Rivers, none of them stick in my memory like "Pudding" and Jackie and Jim of the earlier days.

I did, however, get pretty pally with Tommy Rivers. He was a highly-strung, rather nervy lad, about my age. I don't believe he ever ought to have joined the Mounted, though he always seemed to be enjoying himself. In fact the wilder the job he had to undertake the more he liked it. It excited him, keyed him up, and it was then that he was at his best. But excitement wasn't good for him. I realise that now, in view of what happened later. I met him first at Fort Simpson.

It was in the winter of 1913 that the disaster occurred, and I suppose I had only known him just over a year though it seemed very much longer.

We were at a very Northerly station at the time, at a post not very far from Fort McPherson (only men who volunteered were sent up here).

Tommy and I had to go nearly three hundred miles to a spot where there were only Eskimos and

Indians to capture a huge Indian (reputed to be six-foot eight in height) who was off his head and had run riot, killing a lot of natives.

It didn't sound a pleasant job to me, but Tommy was wild with excitement over it, as he always was over a job that promised to be a tough one. Of course you couldn't tell from the reports that filtered through whether it was going to be a big job or not, for often garbled accounts of terrible happenings came to headquarters which turned out to be nothing of importance at all.

This job, however, did turn out to be very nasty indeed. We got to the village and found all quiet, and we were told that the Indian had not been seen for some days but that he was reported to have been seen by a woman lurking near the village late the previous night. He had actually murdered a man and wounded several others, but none of the villagers had dared to tackle him single handed, and when they had laid a trap for him he had disappeared and now only came back occasionally for food. They were expecting him to return again during the next twenty-four hours.

The descriptions we got of this man's enormous size and of his violent fits of madness convinced me that it would be unwise for Tommy and me to attempt to tackle him alone.

So I arranged for a number of Indians to keep guard at various places round the village and to send word to us if anything was seen of him. Meanwhile, Tommy and I gathered two or three of the

lustiest-looking villagers around us, and waited developments.

Developments came almost immediately. An Indian came dashing into the village to say that the madman had been observed approaching the village. We stationed ourselves in a position from which we knew we should see him pass, and waited.

The capture was an easy matter. He was surprised and though terrifically strong we soon overpowered him and got him bound hand and foot. We stayed up there for the night and started back the next day.

The next few days are, I think, without exception the blackest in my life. I don't know how to describe them—they were so terrible.

I have seen a number of madmen but never such a madman as this. He raved and shrieked until he went purple in the face. . . . He yelled . . . screamed . . . wept . . . writhed . . . moaned. We strapped him to the sleigh and began our long lonely journey.

I want to be brief about this journey for it isn't stuff I like writing down. I was fond of Tommy and I don't like to think of him as he was during those few days. I like to think of him as he was before that, when he was bright, cheerful . . . and sane.

As in the case of the religious maniac I was dogged by ill-luck. It really looked as if in the last year or two my luck had changed for the worse. A blizzard came on—a real bad one—and we were forced to stop and dig ourselves in. We were miles from the

nearest ration-hut. We had just to "stay put" and hope for the best.

It was in the middle of that terrible storm, when the mad Indian was straining and heaving his great body about in wild efforts to get free from the cords that bound him, that I first noticed something queer about Tommy's behaviour. He stood up in the full face of the blizzard and shrieked with laughter.

"Say, what the devil are you doing?" I asked him.

But he said nothing. Just stood there, laughing.

I pulled him down, and then he started fighting like mad. I wasn't ready for this, and at first I thought he was just fooling. He was inclined to do rather mad things. But when he would keep hanging on to me in a silly sort of way, I shouted to him not to be a damned fool.

His only answer was a wild shriek of laughter. And then I began to get seriously alarmed.

I pushed him away from me. Suddenly he whipped out his gun.

"Now I have you at my mercy," he screamed in a high unnatural voice. "One movement and you're a dead man."

His words, ridiculously melodramatic as they were, sounded horrible and grotesque in the middle of that blinding snowstorm with a madman moaning beside us.

With one quick movement I knocked the gun from his hand. He swore and sprang upon me. I wrestled with him, at the same time talking to him

soothingly and trying to reason with him. But he was past reason. He was mad!

I realised this long before I would admit it to myself, but now there was no getting away from the fact. Now that his gun had gone I had no fear, only a terrible pity and grief that such a thing should happen to him. The strain of bringing back that mad Indian had evidently proved too much for him, and his brain had snapped.

I had no difficulty in overpowering him. I was much more strongly-built than he, and whereas the madness of the religious maniac and of the Indian had given them a new strength, it seemed to have weakened Tommy so that he was very soon lying weakly back in the snow, moaning.

He began foaming at the mouth and I saw as I looked down at him that his eyes were strangely wild, and I realised there was only one thing I could do. I strapped him on to the sleigh beside the Indian. . . .

Eventually the blizzard (which, Heaven be praised, was not a very long one) died down, and I started off on the trail once again. I think I can leave the rest of that journey to your imagination. I do not want to describe it.

I can just tell you this—that I have never in my life been nearer to losing my reason. For most of one day I believe I did go half-crazy. I can hardly remember anything about it, but I can remember laughing and shrieking and shouting to myself to drown the terrible noise the two demented men were

making. Two demented men, lying side by side on the sleigh; my best pal and a murderer!

I hadn't the heart to put a gag in Tommy's mouth, but I did eventually stuff something into the Indian's to prevent him from setting up his hideous moans.

I had to feed them. I think that was almost the worst experience of the lot. I dared not unbind them, for both of them were inclined to be violent. I had to force the food down their throats.

Tommy had a wild, piteous look in his eyes as if he couldn't understand it all, as if he were asking me to explain. But he wouldn't talk to me. He just laughed and moaned, laughed and moaned. . . .

I got them back—somehow.

But I was an ill man after that and it was some months before I could do any work.

Tommy went into a Mental Hospital for six months, and after that he partially recovered. But he was never really fit again, and never did any more Mounted Police work.

The North-West had claimed another victim. She got her share from the Mounted Police.

What is it that drives a man mad in those wild Western lands? Loneliness, the interminable snow, monotony, severe exposure, and—GOLD. In the next chapter I shall have something to say about some gold-maniacs I encountered. The lust for gold accounts for most of the misery in the crowded civilised parts of the world just as it does in the North-West Territories where men come from far and wide

to seek it out, thinking in their folly that it will lead them along the path to happiness.

I wonder how many people achieve happiness through gold. I've never met any. In my experience nothing but misery follows in the train of gold, nothing but misery . . . and greed . . . and lust . . . and madness.

CHAPTER XII

GOLD-MANIACS: A MURDERER SAVES MY LIFE

I

A MINER came up to me one day and asked me to arrest him.

"Arrest you?" I exclaimed. "What d'you expect me to arrest you for?"

He was an elderly man, almost bald, with a few stray wisps of grey hair straggling about his head. He looked tired and ill.

"Well," he said, "it's like this. I've struck gold. I was foolish enough to let one or two people know this. I couldn't really help it. I had to pay for one or two things in a café with gold, and then they all crowded round and wanted to know about it. You see, I haven't been able to get my claim registered yet. I'm on my way to get it done. If you don't arrest me, I know I shall be tortured into giving away the secret and letting the profit, that's come to me after forty years of hardship, slip through my fingers. They're clinging to me like leeches, the hounds!" He shook his fist frantically at an imaginary enemy.

"I guess you can come along with me," I told him, "though I can't put you under arrest for nothing. Where are you making for?"

He named a place which happened to lie on my route, so I took him along with me, and thus saved

him from losing the money for which he'd worked for almost a lifetime.

I tell you this little incident just to show what goes on in the gold racket. If I hadn't been handy to look after that wretched man he would either have been bullied into giving his secret away or else they'd have made him drunk and got it out of him that way; and until a claim's been registered it is not legally yours; anyone can go in and pinch it.

In the winter of 1914 I was out in one of the most lonely Northern posts, having arrived there in response to an urgent message for further men to be sent up. There were wild doings up the line, the messenger had said. Some bad men were running amok, holding up people with guns and taking all their dust.

"They're crazy!" the man said. "And I have a kind of hunch that unless you Mounties get up there mighty quickly there'll be murder committed!"

We were very short of men. I was sent up alone to try and restore order.

The Force is much larger nowadays, and anyone who knows it to-day will perhaps be perplexed to know why I was so often sent out on lone jobs. Well, simply because there weren't enough men. Sometimes one man had to do the job of three. It isn't quite so bad as it sounds, for we were fully authorised to order traders and anyone who happened to be on the spot to assist us. But of course there were occasions (as in the case of the religious maniac)

when fifty miles separates you and the man you have to get from human habitation.

I had a good team and I made the spot in five days after hard going over ice and snow. The word soon went round that a "Mountie" had arrived, and before long I was being deluged with complaints.

Briefly what they amounted to was this. A gang of four men had been up to the diggings and had drawn blanks. They had been through terrible hardships and in consequence of this, and the fact that they had an inordinate desire for gold (lust is probably a better word) they had lost their reasons. They had been using all sorts of violence to get the dust that had evaded them at the diggings.

I had known this to happen before. Many a perfectly normal man has become deranged after consistent bad luck at the diggings. But it seemed strange that four men should all have become mentally deranged at the same time. Very terrible if it turned out to be true.

"Where are the men now?" I questioned.

No one seemed to know.

To tackle four half-crazed men single-handed was a great deal more than I was willing to face and I decided to make up a party of men to go in search of them.

However, to begin with I had to make a few more enquiries about them. I learnt that they made a practice of swooping on a place, making a quick raid at the point of a gun, and then vanishing before there was a chance of raising a hue-and-cry. It

seemed to me that the men were probably not entirely mad, but just half-crazed over this one point—the lust for gold. It was gold they were stealing, the gold that they considered they had been done out of up at the diggings. Gold was their desire, and their desire had reached the point of madness. That was the way I looked at the situation then, and I was right as far as I went. But I didn't go far enough. The men were far crazier than I had guessed.

I could get no clue as to where they had gone. They seemed temporarily to be lying low.

But the night after I arrived I was lying in bed when I heard a great commotion going on outside the hut. It sounded like the rattle of a sledge; I thought I could hear the dogs shaking the traces. I leapt out of bed and went to the door.

It was a sledge. The man in charge, a dark figure outlined against the sky rushed towards me when he saw me come out.

"For God's sake, come quickly!" he yelled. "There's been some dirty work. Somebody's been killed!"

"Where?" I asked crisply.

He named the place.

"Right. You start back. I'll get dressed and follow you up. My dogs are good, and they'll be fresh so I should catch you up pretty soon. You can tell me more about it then."

"That's the way to do things," he exclaimed. "I'll be off again, then, Mountie. See you later."

I got dressed rapidly, and limbering up my team of dogs I made a start. These dogs were wonderful animals and could go through a hard night's run without turning a hair. I often wonder what we would do out in the North-West without our amazing huskies.

I caught up my informant, got a little more information from him and then went on ahead.

He was a trader, he said, and when going past a creek he'd seen the most terrific scuffle going on. He had heard shots and seen a number of mad-looking men rushing wildly about. They'd seen him and started coming towards him, and whether rightly or wrongly he hadn't waited to see any more but had come to inform me for all he was worth.

I got to the creek and looked about me. There were signs of a terrible struggle having taken place near the banks of the creek. The snow was stained with blood, and from the way in which the stains lay it looked very much to me as if some bodies had been dragged down to the creek and flung in. Pieces of food and warm ashes showed me the site of the camp. From there I followed a line of blood to the bank and peering into the stream I saw the bodies of two men lying under a thin coating of ice. They had evidently been dumped through a hole in the ice which had frozen lightly over again.

My informant had come up by this time, so I sent him back to the village to get volunteers to come and get the bodies out. They were obviously dead, and I had more important work to do myself.

I pushed on following a distinct sled-track, and my dogs went along at a lively pace. I travelled thus for about two hours when I suddenly heard a shrill cry, like the cry of an animal, a kind of screeching moan. It was a terrible sound, a sound that made me shudder. Then I pulled myself together and urged my dogs on.

In the light of the moon I could see the sled tracks ahead of me as clearly as if it had been day. It was a beautiful night. I gave my team a taste of the lash and we sped through the crisp snow at a splendid pace.

All of a sudden I shouted at the top of my voice to my team:

"Har! Ha-aa-ar!"

They swerved just in time.

I had seen something lying on the trail directly in front of me. If we'd swerved a second later we'd have been over it.

I ran back to see what it was. It was the body of a young man. His eyes were cold and staring sightlessly up at the moon.

There was a wicked bullet-hole through his temple.

It was a ghastly sight, a sight I shall never forget. I realised it was his death-cry I had heard.

"Mush!" I yelled to the dogs and on we sped again. I knew the murderer couldn't be very far ahead.

I blazed the trail, whipping the dogs into a really wonderful turn of speed. I was determined to get my man.

At last, in the moonlight, dead ahead of me, I saw a man driving his dogs like a demon, rocking and swaying from side to side. But my dogs were superior, though my driving not so reckless, and I gained on him. As I drew nearer I could hear loud whoops and yells and screeches coming from him. He was obviously demented.

He turned and saw me behind him.

I pulled my gun and fired in the air.

CRACK! The noise echoed and broke in ugly fashion upon the stillness of the night.

I called upon him to stop. Whether he heard me or not he took no notice, but continued in his mad career.

I drew level with him, and put my gun back in its holster, preparing to spring upon him.

Swish! There was a stinging pain across my face near my eyes. He had made a savage cut at me with his whip.

I leapt, and together we rolled into the snow. He fought, he bit, he kicked, all the time yelling and screeching like mad.

In the end I overpowered him, but not without a long struggle. And as he lay in the snow suddenly weak after his terrific exertions I could see sanity of a sort returning to him. It was a terrible sight. He looked like a man waking from a frightful dream, who says: "Was it a dream? Or did it really happen?"

It certainly wasn't a dream in this case. Would to God it had been. I wouldn't have had to witness

the agony in this man's face as he realised the truth.

He moaned feebly and buried his face in his hands. Then he burst into tears, rocking himself to and fro in a frenzy.

"What's the matter, old son?" I asked him gently.

In spite of the terrible things he had done, I felt pity for him.

"Gold . . . gold . . ." he moaned. "It was the gold that did it. I've been mad. I didn't know what I was doing. Let me tell you my story."

"Yes, tell me," I urged gently.

"I chucked everything away to come to this blasted place. Everything. Wife and kiddie. I left them all. What for? For gold, gold, gold, gold, GOLD!" His voice rose to a shriek.

I put a restraining hand on his arm and he quietened down, and went on.

"I felt sure I'd strike it rich, but I didn't—not for a very long time. But I did in the end. I did, Mountie, really!"

He was pathetically eager to convince me.

"I set off with a lot of dust, making for one of the bigger stations where I meant to bank the stuff, and then make for home again. But I fell in with a girl. She was beautiful. I fell in love with her. Ah, but I can see it now. She only wanted my gold. She spent . . . and spent . . . and spent. All my money went on her. Then when I was broke she chucked me. I went half-mad. I had to make

for the diggings again. I fell in with a rough crowd there. I was in a crazy mood, ready for anything. I wouldn't stop at killing if there was a chance of getting gold again that way.

"We were unlucky. We struck no gold. The others were half-crazed by this time. We started holding up people. We got madder and madder. And you know what happened. . . ."

"What happened down by the creek?" I asked.

"We all quarrelled," he said simply. "One young fellow I liked better than the others. He and I shot the others down by the creek. That shook him up—he was only young—made him crazier still. But we kept together. Then I felt we were being followed. There was no chance of escape if two of us were driving. It was him or me. I shot him. Oh-h, I shall never forget his face when I drew my gun and he realised what I was going to do!"

He covered up his face with his hands again. He had hardly shown any emotion until then. He was still a bit crazy, I reckoned, and I'd better be getting him back.

When I got him back I found that what he'd told me was true.

Poor devil! Fortunately he was found insane and was put into an asylum. He may still be there for all I know.

Just another victim of the West and its gold.

II

BEFORE I close this book I want to tell you in a few words a more pleasant incident than the last one. I don't want to finish on a dismal or depressing note, for things in the North-West aren't all bad. Fine and honourable things happen as well as unpleasant ones. Here is an instance.

The winter of 1914 was a very severe one, and my patrol at one period extended over two hundred miles. I heard there was trouble at the extreme end of my patrol, and made a long forced run to get there. I found that a half-breed had knifed a man in a gambling brawl and was being held captive by the storkeeper.

I started back with my man in very severe weather. But we got through all right, and about half-way back we made camp in a small clearing.

I was feeding the dogs when I had the misfortune to be bitten by one of them, a horrible bite right through the ankle of my right leg. I yelled out with the pain and then lost consciousness.

There is no doubt I was in extreme danger of losing my life, and if I had been alone I undoubtedly should have done. There was a chance of hyrophobia setting in. Anyway I couldn't have travelled at all and I should have simply lain in the camp waiting for my death.

It was a mercy that I had the half-breed with me. That man may not have been quite white on the outside, but he was mighty white inside. He was one

of the whitest men I've ever met. He was being taken back almost certainly to be hanged. Yet, rather than escape when the opportunity presented itself he saved my life.

He acted promptly, sucked the poison from my foot, and bandaged it up with a piece of his shirt. Then, not delaying an instant, he limbered the dogs again and drove me all the way back in nasty weather to headquarters.

I'm glad to say that he got a term of imprisonment that wasn't very severe, as a result of the report I sent in, in which I described his good work in glowing terms.

There are many fine characters in the North-West, and you don't always find them on the right side of the law!

CONCLUSION

GET YOUR MAN

WELL, I've told my tale. And I hope the impression I've left with you of life in the North-West Mounted is not altogether a bad one.

It's a rough life, an adventurous life, a life for strong men, but above all it's a man's life and that is saying a good deal in these days when so few people have either the inclination or the opportunity to live a life that is fit for a man.

Only a very small proportion of my days have been spent in the Mounted Police, but I like to think that those seven years after I first grew up and when I was fulfilling my dearest boyhood's ambition formed for me a code of life that I have always kept to.

GET YOUR MAN! A command that brings to the minds of some ill-informed people an idea of harshness, cruelty, ruthlessness; an utterly wrong-headed idea, to put it mildly. In all my seven years I never saw an unjust action done by a member of the Police. I have seen heavy handed measures taken where such measures were necessary; I have taken part in them myself. I am not going to try and pretend that the sternest measures are not sometimes carried out. They are. And no one could be more sternly efficient than a Mounted

Policeman when it's a question of grim necessity.

But what I'm trying to point out is this: that the old ringing command "GET YOUR MAN" does not mean, as ignorant and malicious persons have interpreted it, "Get your man! Don't spare the other fellow! Give him Hell, but bring him back!" It means rather: "Don't spare yourself! Go through Hell if necessary, but bring your man back!"

I find it difficult to express exactly what I mean, but I think the difference between these two interpretations is plain enough. "Get Your Man" signifies an undying determination to win through however heavily the dice are loaded against you, but not the ruthlessness that some people associate with the North-West Mounted Police. Perhaps it is a distinction that can only be appreciated by the Police themselves.

I have laid stress upon this point because I feel it is an important one. I have an affection for the old Force that has lasted a good deal longer than most affections do, and—it's not the kind of thing a man likes to talk about much—I know it's an affection that will always be with me. So it hurts a bit when I hear people talking a lot of rubbish about the Force. Anyway I'm hoping some of them will take a dip into this book and change their opinions.

Writing is thirsty work, and I reckon authors must be mighty thirsty people. (I don't know; I've never met any!) A mug of ale would be nice; I think I'll just step out and get one. . . .

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And now that my book is finished I think the time has come for a toast—a silent toast—to all my old pals of the North-West; little Molly Cornish, Jim, Pudding, Jackie, and all the others.

Here's to the Good Old Days then, and the good old North-West Mounted!

THE END

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